

(13)

Gifford Palegrave

With hopes of love

Seeing the Pageant .

To Henry Gow
with my love.

Stotsford a. B. r.

Amos. 2913.

POEMS



P O E M S

BY

STOPFORD A. BROOKE

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SIX DAYS

How long the winter was, I cannot tell ,
For every day was winter while I lived
Far from the sunlight of her eyes, whose heart
Beat upon mine with passionate youth and love.
At last a lingering Easter, bringing flowers
To streams and meadows, set me free from toil.
Sweet May had come, and winged with joy I fled
Out of the City to her mountain home ;
And found her lovelier than a summer wood
Gay with the singing of a thousand birds,
And loving with a rapture that excelled
All I had known before.

The day was clear,
And far into the low, entangled hills

We went alone, and near a rocky stream,
That through twelve silver birches, fluttering gold,
Ran tawny-topaz, found the solitude
That lovers long desire. Rough boulders lay
Couched on the daisied grass in sun and shade,
Like cattle resting in the noon, and seemed
To listen to the tidings that the brook
Told of the hill-tops where its springs were green.
One alder, midst these white-limbed maidens, gnarled
And wrinkled as a mountain dwarf, stretched out
His knotted fingers o'er the bank and made
Between them seats, wherein we sat, embraced
By Joy and Love. 'With what glad noise,' I said,
'This stream and all the hills that feed it hail
Your presence ; all their life is yours, and you
Are, like them, Nature's daughter.'

' If,' she said,
' Nature is prodigal to me, what gifts
Will you give now for love's sake and my own ?
Six days you stay with us, and every day,
If you would be a happy lover, sing
The gifts of love. Begin, and if your verse
Be worthy you and me and love, why then,

Perhaps I shall give you more than you may claim.'
Then I, who saw her gay impassioned glance
That promised more than speech, began to sing.

I

Winter and its sorrows deep
In the grave are laid in sleep ;
Earth and Heaven sweet airs bring ;
Winds and waters, rushing, sing—
' May is come, and in her hand
All the blossoms of the land ;'
They shall be enriched with dew,
And their beauty I give you.

Yours shall be the lilies pale,
Wild wind-flowers and sorrel frail,
Cowslips from whose golden lip
Honeyed rain the fairies sip,
Stately hyacinths that take
Blue from Heaven's deepest lake,
And king-cups that rich and bold
Burn where pebbled streams are cold.

Dim primroses you shall wear,
Apple-blossoms that can dare
April hail-storms, and bluebells
Maidens love in wandering dells ;
Violets wet with Ceres' tears
When she sought for Proserpine ;
And the daisy flower that cheers
Poets when their hearts repine.

Let the wild-briar love to creep
O'er the casement where you sleep ;
And the jasmine stars be made
In your shimmering hair to braid.
On your bosom the wild rose
With an equal ardour glows ;
And the passionate woodbine
Round your dainty waist I twine.

Call the daffodils that please
Mountain brooks and love the breeze ;
Call the thorns whose wizard blooms
Make white fire in grassy combes ;
Call the lilies of the fen,

Furze that flames from glen to glen—
Call aloud, and far and near
All the world of flowers shall hear.

Hark, they answer ; hear their cries,
'We are waiting for thine eyes.'
Glen and hill and rocky moor,
Ancient gardens, meadow-floor,
Woodland, streams, and all the earth,
Break into their song of mirth—
'Thou, most beautiful, to-day
Art the only Queen of May.'

I finished with a mounting melody ;
And she, who lay outstretched among the fern,
Soft pleasure wandering o'er her wayward mouth,
Unlocked her hands behind her soft brown hair,
Opened and dropped her eyes, and smiling, said—
'What woman could refuse to praise a song
That praises her so much ? Yet it is plain
Town-life has left you ignorant of flowers ;
The wild rose slumbers till the kiss of June,
The golden daffodil died in April's arms,

And the woodbine? Well once, at the end of May,
I saw with grave astonishment a plant
That dared to flower.'

'Sweet Critic, then,' I said,
'I've dared like the woodbine; my daffodils
Lived on to greet you, and my rose was born
Out of due time to blossom on your breast.'

'See, see,' she laughed, 'how good to criticise!
It brings a happy answer; you've done well,
But most because you love me; therefore take
What you like best for guerdon.'

'Nay,' said I,
'Give me reward, and of your own sweet will.'

'No, no; but if you take reward with grace
It may be I will give you, what you take.'
At which I kissed her where she lay, but she
Returned my kiss, and kindling at the touch,
Threw her wild arms around my neck, and pressed
Her lips to mine—then springing up, her cheek
Rose-lit with love, raced with me through the wood,
And down the hill, following the noisy brook
That brought us home, when in the vault of Heaven,
The light of Jupiter alone was clear.

Next day, the sun was lord of all the world,
Fierce-breathing like a dragon in the cave
Of the o'erarching sky, and deep in sheltering woods,
Like deer at noon, we seeking covert reached
A grove of mighty chestnuts, from whose edge
Stretched a wide glade, and o'er it moved at will
White clouds of daisies—Smooth the sward, and fit
For tilting knights, or fairy troops to meet,
In battle or in dance, by star or moon.
The birds were still, the shadows of the leaves
Played on my true love's face and on the dress
That, coloured like a hawthorn-blossom, clad
Her beauty with such fitness that she seemed
To wear her own sweet thoughts. Silent she gazed
On the green meadow, thinking of the time
When Chivalry rode glittering through the woods,
And then of Love whose spear smote knight and squire
And page and vassal to the earth—alone
The Conqueror! And then she turned to me,
Herself subdued by love, and smiling said,
'What will my lover give to me to-day?
This is a world where old romance is king.'

'Young is romance,' I answered, 'when your eyes

Gleam like Titania's as, surprised by dawn
Still dancing, she makes mock of Oberon.
Take then this song of you, and Fairyland.'

II

I give you, my Maiden bright
All world-stories of delight ;
Songs that young Athenians made
Wandering in the laurel shade ;
Arab tales where lovers died,
Some of sorrow, some of pride,
O'er whose fate we weep and say,
'Would that they had had their day.'

Gests of old romance, where I,
Pacing through the forest high,
See you waiting death, and hear
The dread Dragon drawing near ;
Slay the monster, and with vows
Win your love where woven boughs
Hide from bold Apollo's face
Timid passion's first embrace.

Morn shall see us hunt our food
Through the song-awakened wood ;
Noon behold you sleeping laid,
While I watch you in the shade ;
Evening call us, hand in hand,
Homewards through the dewy land.
Far from pain and care and strife,
O the fine enchanted life !

Then at night we shall peep out
From our door to see the rout
Of King Oberon sweep by,
Merry-mad with minstrelsy.
From his car by lynxes drawn,
And of moonlight woven and dawn,
He will nod to us and say,
'Mortal lovers, snatch your day.'

Near him, we should see in air
Puck, the mischief-monger, flare,
And the Indian boy advance
Elfin banner, shield and lance ;

While a hundred fairies swing
Foxgloves and bluebells that ring
Chimes so delicate and dim
Thought alone can hear their hymn.

All is silence now, until
The nightingale begin to trill
A sweet welcome, soft and true ;
And Titania o'er the dew,
With her maidens like the moon
Midst the pallid stars of June,
Shining gloriously, and borne
On a snow-white unicorn,

Slowly ride across the glade ;
'Lovers, be ye unafraid,'
She would cry ; and with her hand
Make us free of Fairyland.
O sweet Maiden, sweeter far
Than all the Queens of Faery are ;—
Take these gifts from my romance,
Give them gracious countenance.

‘I take them, for I love romance and you ;
And Oberon has always been my friend.’

‘Your friend,’ I cried—a little wave of pique
Cresting my voice, ‘when have you known the
King?’

Laughing, she said, ‘I knew him when a child ;
For, angered with my nurse one night, I fled
Out of the open window, down the path
That through the garden leads into the park,
Until,—the moon being on the brow of Heaven—
I reached the central glade, and there they were ;
Oberon and all the fairies dancing, wild
With mirth, and hunting the moonlight among
The stems of bracken. Oberon, who saw
My mutinous face, mistook me for the girl
He wooed in India, Phyllida by name,
And danced with me, but when he found he erred,
Swore by his sceptre I was fairer far
Than half a score Titantias ; and since then,
Whene’er the moon is shining, I know well
He seeks me in the glade—but do not let
Jealousy whirl her fiery wheel in you ;
I have kept apart ; I have not seen the King :

You think you have the fairies to yourself,
'Tis error, Sir, all women know them well.'

'A charming tale,' I said, 'but have you thought
That, being told, if ever I should meet
King Oberon, one of us two must die?
You laugh, so light are women, when they sow
The teeth of war—yet, when I look on you,
I praise the Fairy King, for who could help
To love you, worthy that great nations, worlds
At war in space, should fight unto the death,
To win one quick surrender of your eyes,
One gay impassioned conquest of your lips.'

'The flattery seems too much,' she said, 'but yet
I like it well, 'tis thus you ought to speak;
I hope you feel it'—and she flashed on me
So sweet, persuasive, warm and bright a glance
That all my lighter mood departed, and
The seriousness of passion closed o'er me,
As ocean o'er the head of him who dives
To find the moon of pearls. I took her hand,
Trembling from head to foot, and led her on,
Silent, but understood by her; and saw
Close to the Hall, from a great eminence,

Over a milky sea the sun descend,
Ruddy as David's hair, and ovalled large
Behind a fortress wall of cloud engrailed
With battlement and tower. The evening Heaven
Was stiller than the Ocean; and faint clouds,
Like long-forgotten thoughts tinged with the rose
Of sudden recollection, slept therein,
Islands, untouched by storm, in azure seas—
And shed on us the perfect peace that passeth
All understanding, and the beauty held
In everlasting purity and love.
I lost all earthly thought ; and on her face
Spoke so divine a joy she seemed removed
From sense and sorrow, but the more at one
With me in that still hour. And when the sun
Slow sank behind the rampart o'er the sea,
Yet, dying, flushed the Heaven with Love's sweet colour,
She sighed, and stole her hand to mine, and I,
Because I loved her, knew she thought of pain,
Of parted passion, pale sunsets of joy.
'Think of no sorrow now,' I said. 'When Life
Loses its light, another chance is given ;
Hesper and Phosphor interchange ; all pain

Preludes to joy, all joy perhaps to pain ;
But, in the end, Joy, being one with God,
Must overflow all pain. Trouble no more
Our little hour with thought. Since youth and love
Live with us ; take their rapture ; we shall feel
No less, but more of, sympathy with grief.
Smooth your sweet brow ; not death but life will rise
To-morrow when the Sun pursues the Dawn.'

'O yes,' she answered, 'we will have our day ;
And when the afternoon is full of songs,
Visit my hollow dell where clustered thorns,
Snow-clad with blossom, make the Spring more dear
With images of Winter. Sweet their scent,
Laden with legend and the lore of love ;
There is my favourite nest, where, like a bird,
I sit and think, sometimes, of you. Around,
Smooth, shining hollies stand, and near at hand
A boulder rises, haunted by the wren,
Huge as a castle, dropped, they say, long since
By drifting icebergs. There your heart shall make
A gallant lyric to the girl you love.'

And so, next day, we drove through windless lanes,

Worn through the living rock ; but high above
A wilderness of over-drooping trees
Cast pleasing shade and cool, beneath whose arch,
Grew nodding broom and groves of gorse that flamed
Like that strange bush on Sinai. Mosses and fern
Filled every cranny of the stone ; and flowers
Bloomed in as wild profusion as the thoughts
Born in a lover's heart. The speedwell there
Lifted its blue eyes to the sapphire sky,
The wild wind-flower trembled in the wind,
And midst the tangled roots the hyacinths
Stood with the white starflowers, hand in hand ;
While nestling everywhere, sweet violets,
The simplest-hearted people of the woods,
Stole their dim odours through the grateful air ;
And many more that tapestried the banks
More richly than kings' chambers. Low and loud,
From different levels of the lofty sky,
The larks sang cheerily, and seemed to tell
The glorious story of the Earth in May
To the listening heart of Heaven ; and when we reached,
Climbing the dell, the grass and wandering thyme
Beneath the boulder, and the holly-trees

That glittered round it in the sun, each set
In its own plot of sward—I never heard
So rapturous a singing of the birds,
As then from copse, and mead, and hill, and sky,
From the whole universe it seemed, poured forth
In unremittent rivalry of joy.

‘Listen,’ my dear companion said ; ‘they sing
Their welcome to our pleasure, sing with them,
Give me the song of all the happy birds ;
Give me the birds themselves, and they shall live
Among the flowers you versed at first, and be
Some comfort to my heart, when you are gone.’
Then I, within the landscape of whose soul
She sang like all the birds, began to sing.

III

Thou who midst the tuneful throng
Art most master of the Song,
Come with all the birds and praise
My sweet mistress in your lays !
Let your music quire her truth,
Young-eyed beauty, love and youth ;

Sing her till the woods and sky
Know her charm as well as I.

Hark, with what a plaintive din
The wooing willow-wrens begin.
First the notes mount full and round ;
Then in long and tender sound,
Along the scale they die and fill
All the woodland with their trill.
Little, brown, soft-nested birds,
Lovers understand your words.

Next, the bold, inspiring thrush
Joins the chorus with a rush ;
Two and two his notes are flung,
Could we two be better sung ?
While the blackbird in the trees,
Like a gentleman at ease,
Mellow as the month of June,
Whistles leisurely his tune.

Everywhere the chaffinch sings ;
Hurried are the notes he strings :

Rippling, warbling, swift he goes,
With a flourish at the close.
Hear the linnet, happy elf,
Softly twittering to himself ;
While the blackcap's song of mirth
Gossips of the full-fed earth.

These are birds of all the day ;
But red robin on the spray
Sings at eve his plaintive tune.
Soft it is as light in June !
All his passion is afloat
On the waves that fill his throat.
Suddenly he ceases—then
His music ripples forth again.

Have you heard them, have you seen,
How refuged in their roofs of green,
Every bird with throat of dew
Sings his heart out unto you ?
Far away the wild-dove coos,
It is you in thought he woos ;

Sorrowful his notes repine,
For he knows that you are mine.

From the bosom of the hill
Calls the cuckoo—Let him tell
How, when first I loved you, I
Listened for his earliest cry ;
Heard it, and impassioned, said,
' Let her heart be mine, and fed
By the fire in mine alit ;'
Hark ! the bird remembers it.

Let the lark, the voice of light,
Lord of open space and flight,
Sing his dazzling joy for you !
He has taken, bathed in dew,
All the earth has dreamed at night
To the top of Heaven's height.
Nought more lovely can he tell
Than your presence in the dell.

Where the sunlight cannot peep,
And the windless woods do sleep,
In the hollow of the vale

Sings the lonely nightingale.
All the passion, all the sorrow
Day has suffered, all to-morrow
Brings of hope indulged in vain,
Of sweet pleasure closed in pain,

All the world's grief, new and old,
In the varied song is told.
Night and Dawn who hear it, weep,
Crying, 'O let sorrow sleep.'
Depth and sweetness of the song,
O my Love, to you belong,
And the passion—but the pain
Shall be absent from the strain.

Last, within my heart, unheard
Sings a solitary bird :
'Love-of-you' the bird is named,
And its music is unfamed.
Yet to me its magic tale
Is sweeter than the nightingale.
Lay your head upon my breast,
And you shall hear it in its nest.

I finished as the slowly westering sun
Drove through the umbraged elms its shafts of fire,
And in the warm, enchanted afternoon
The throstle raised his animated song,
Piping of health and cheer to wood and vale ;
Full of quick sentences and jovial cries,
And javelins of sound.

‘This is,’ I said,

‘The golden music of a wedded life,
Rejoicing, through its happy nights and days,
To change the common earth by love and faith
To Eden and its pleasure. Long our lives
Shall sing the throstle’s clear and honest song.’
Then she, upon whose delicate cheek her thought
Flushed in sweet colour, said—‘O not the whole
Of our life’s needful music flows within
That steady song. Imagination’s world
Be also ours, the rush of soaring joy,
And passion filled with spirit, love that sings
On cloudy days. I give the thrush to you,
But I will bring the skylark into life—
Look up and listen !’

And I looked and saw

The happy creatures in the azure vault,
Mounting with wings that beat in swift accord
To every quivering note, and each rejoiced
In his own rapture, sphered in his own song,
That vibrated with passion all alone.
'Tis well,' I said, 'that they'—and as I spoke,
Two dropt like stones into their low-thatched hut—
'Return from voyaging celestial seas,
Else would their ecstasy of feeling end
In fine monotony. Sunshine it has,
Simplicity of joy ; but shadow none ;
And of the wild variety that pain
Makes in man's wandering through thought and fate,
The lark knows nothing. We are now in quiet,
Joy's fountain leaps within us—but afar,
Beyond our sheltered garden, grief, gray care,
Restless disease and death implacable,
Nature's grim laws, enforce their curse on man,
And most, his own Desires, that like great kings,
Each with their hosts, besiege him, and forbid
All peace.'

She laughed, and shook her sunny hair ;
'Not yet,' she cried, 'need I consider this !

The time will come, too soon, when you are gone,
To know the pain and trouble of the world.
But now, why cloud our happy day of love
With woful thinking? You a lover! If
You must complain, sweetly complain of me;
That is the truer way—and hark the air
Is filled with love's wild music—Nightingale,
Teach him the song to please a woman's ear.'

'O argued well,' I answered, glad to yield;
'Pardon the fool who sagely talked of man
When he loved you—incarnate womanhood!
I take with joy and gratitude your gift,
The skylark in your heart. Be ever thus,
Live always in the happiness that soars
And sings in Heaven, and bring me in your flight
To the throne of God. And if at times your song
Be manifold and tender, magical
With honey, like the nightingale's this eve,
No sorrow then inhabit it, nor pain,
But only the wild wandering changefulness,
Which, in the unity of love contained,
Enchants and promises.'

'You speak,' she said,

‘ My very heart, indeed I love you for it ,
But why so much philosophy? There are
Far more effective ways to prove your love.’
At which she dashed away, and light of foot
Wheeled round the boulder, crying, ‘ Follow, follow !’
Then I, far wiser, ran the opposite way,
And met her flying at speed, with open arms,
Into whose happy clasp, surprised, she fell,
Half willing, half unwilling ; but I, thrilled
By such a world of beauty on my heart,
Felt like the Genoese pilot when his prow
Touched the palm-waving islands and white beach
Of the new Continent, and pressed my palms
Upon her brow, and bending back her head,
Kissed her devoutly as Columbus kissed
The Western World. ‘ O you are right,’ I cried,
‘ This is the only old Philosophy
And always young.’

‘ At last,’ she said, ‘ you know
The truth ; I thought you found it long ago.’
Whereat the nightingale, who listened near,
Burst into such a tempest of delight,
So glorious and so amorous a song,

That twilight hushed, and all the earth—and we
Stood rapt, and felt the bird sang all we knew.
'It is enough,' she said, 'farewell, sweet singer,
Thy liquid song of love shall lead us home.'
And driving through the growing night we saw
The thin and spiritual curve of the moon
Move like a reaper's hook above the pines,
And in the north, Arcturus' steady flame
Burn underneath a fleecy cloud, whose hair
Streamed o'er the mountains. 'See,' I said, 'our star
Fixed and immortal as our love, inflames
All Heaven with joy.' At which she slid her hand
Warm into mine, and so we reached her home.

She sang that night. Musician to the tips
Of her fine fingers, and interpreting
With reverence her music, she was touched
From note to note with momentary moods
Of her own nature, so that he that heard,
Not only loved the music, but her heart.
I watched the enchanting changes of her face,
And she, though losing all her self in art,
Felt at the last the power of my love,

And looking up, beheld my eager eyes,
At which she suddenly broke off her song,
To fling her heart upon a ballad's tale.

'O who will go to the knight of Vair
And tell him I'm like to die,
And give him the pledge that he gave me
A year that has passed by.

For he rides back from the war to-day
In the King's company,
And gallant his deeds, and gay his heart,
But I think he's forgotten me.'

'O I will go, my lady I love,
And hold the boy in my hand,
And the knight shall lift the child to his lips
In the middle of the band.'

'O what is the noise of trumpets I hear,
And of horses' hoofs that beat?'

'It is the King and his men,' said she,
'Come riding down the street.'

‘O haste thee, haste,’ the lady cried,
‘And take the babe along,
And call Sir Vair to come to me
From the middle of the throng.’

And she has taken the boy in her arms,
Where loud the trumpets ring ;
And soon was aware of proud Sir Vair
Who rode beside the King.

His horse was black as the raven’s wing,
And his armour like the night,
And his eyes were darker than death with pain,
And his cheek like the pale moonlight.

And he looked at her house and said in his heart,
‘Alas that she is dead,
There was never reward the King could give
So sweet as Margaret’s head.’

‘Sir Vair, Sir Vair,’ the nurse she cried,
‘Look up and speak to me ;
And hast thou forgotten Margaret thy wife
Who has borne a boy to thee?’

He sprang from the horse, and he kissed the boy,
He could not there abide ;
'And is Margaret alive,' he said ; 'O God,
They told me she had died ;

And I have wept a thousand tears,
A thousand deaths have known ;
Farewell, my King and nobles all,
For Margaret is my own.'

And O they wept, and O they smiled,
And kissed the laughing boy ;
And the nurse upon the staircase sat
And sobbed aloud for joy.

'Do you like that?' she said, 'the words are his
Who loved me, whom I love, the music's mine ;
They chime together, for he loves me still ;'
And flashing on me one of her quick looks,
That wrap me in a living flame, she rose
And left me lonely, but her presence came
Into the world of sleep and made it Eden.

The next day, happy as a boy and girl,
We climbed the purple moor that overhung
The little village couched beside the park ;
And resting on the stone-strewn summit, where
The Celtic people built their camps of old,
Felt, as we traced the avenues and carns,
Cromlech and barrow, mid the sheep-fed grass,
That all the landscape of our love had grown
More dear through this communion with the life
Of old humanity, long dead, but now
Present, with all its passion, to the heart.
We peopled the hillside, and dreamed that love
As deep, as warm as ours, filled the wild maids
And warriors wandering here at even ; bright
And fair and happy, they as we, and yet
Lost to the earth a thousand years ago.
' Well, if they loved, they lived,' I said, and took
Her hand, and while the breeze untied her hair,
Ran with her down the hill, alit with joy
And health, and watched her eyes where Love and Youth
Danced a gay round together—till we reached,
Breathless, the dark brown firs that on a knoll
Steep o'er the tarn, stood round the Druids' stone,

Each like a hooded priest—nor lingering there
Went o'er the grassy ridges, whence we saw
Between two wrinkled oaks, a wedge of sea
Blue in the distance, and at last, dropped down
Through beechen coverts and through broken rocks,
Into our well-belovèd glen, that full
Of rustling winds and waters running fast,
Received us in its bosom. All the way
Was known and loved, for in this very walk,
Two years ago, I won her shy consent
To live for me, as I had lived for her.
And here we rested where the lime-trees dipped
Their golden eaves, where first I kissed her lips
And took her trembling in my arms and felt
Her life in mine ;—and there I sang the day.

IV

Come, where on the moorland steep
Silent sunlight dreams of sleep,
And in this high morning air
Love me, my companion fair!
All the clouds that high in Heaven
Rest and rove from morn to even

All the beauty that doth live
By the winds—to thee I give.

See below deep meadow lands,
Misty moors and shining sands,
And blue hills so far and dim
They melt on the horizon's rim.
O how fresh the air, and sweet,
And with what a footfall fleet
O'er the grasses' ebb and flow
The light winds to the eastward go.

Noon is now with us. Farewell
To this mountain citadel.
Come, and with your footing fine
Thread the scented paths of pine,
Till we see the Druid carn
Shadowed in the haunted tarn.
There the water, blue and deep,
Lies, like wearied thought, asleep.

While we watch, the storm awakes ;
Flash on flash the ripple breaks,
Purple, with a snow-white crest,

On the meadow's golden breast.
Roods of tinkling sedge are kissed
By the waves of amethyst :
Trouble knows the place, they say,
But we laugh at that to-day.

Onward to the glen below ;
Every nook and turn we know
Where the passion-haunted stream
Laughs and lingers in its dream,
Making where its pebbles shine
Naiad music, clear and fine,
But not sweeter than the song
Love sings as we rove along.

At the last the grassy seat,
Where of old we used to meet,
Holds us in its close embrace.
Hallowed ever be the place !
Here we kissed our hearts away
In a lover's holiday !
Shall I dream a greater bliss
Than the memory of this ?

And ending thus, I smiled, but she whose wit
Is quick as when a kingfisher, alarmed,
Darts o'er a beech-clad river, said, 'Is then
The past so much? I am glad, but were I you,
The present would forget the past; and I
Here, warm and living, at your side, be more
Than memories of me. Make a new day;
Must I be jealous of myself gone by?
The lover with his mistress knows no past,
And no to-come.'

Frowning she rose, but I,
Who saw a smile imprisoned on her lips,
Fell on my knees and cried—'What, no forgiveness?'
'None, none,' she said. 'Why then, I pardon you,'
Boldly I said, and springing to my feet
Ran straight into her arms—'Forget the past!
Shall I forget the upbuilding of romance?
Make a new day! No need, for every day
Is a fresh rose just opened to the sun,
Because you change like Nature, hour by hour,
And all the past, in each new impulse seen,
Becomes a beauty unconceived before.
Your mouth keeps always its enrapturing curve,

But each of all the myriad moods that flit
Through your fine spirit alters that sweet line
To unknown beauty ; so, my past is made
New in your changing present, and I love
Present and past in one.'

She laughed and said,

'The excuse is clever, and the judge is kind ;
There is my hand to kiss, but yet because
A little rancour lurks in me, and more,
Because I liked your song until the end,
I sentence you to sing another, when
We go to-morrow to the cliff that frowns
Like Atlas o'er the sea, and there perchance,
I shall forgive you altogether, but
Not now. Farewell, think on your song, and come
After me quickly ; hark, my father calls.'

But I, who knew the old man would delay
Among his ferneries a long-spun hour,
And claim his daughter for himself alone,
Raced up the mountain side and climbed along
A flanking dyke which rose aslant and steep,
Ridged like a dragon's back with rocky horns ;

And reached the pointed head, that far outstretched
Watched greedily the plain. Beneath me lay
The land far spread, and in the growing dusk
The sounds of labour going home to rest
Rose, vexing the high silence of the hills.
Hushed as the Ocean's depths, the heights of air,
Warm with the vapours sucked from tropic seas,
Thick brooded o'er me and presaged the storm.
But, through the dreadful calm, the Horror crept,
That in the heart of Nature lives with beauty,
Dim like a phantom, and her caverned eyes
Burned with contempt; and then, the gloomy rifts,
The hollow cirque of sounding precipice,
The sense that the great cliff whereon I stood
Moved underneath me like a thing alive,
The dim green tarn four hundred feet below,
Clasped in its barren basalt cup and filled
With windless waters, the black raven's cry
Hoarse as the hungry sea—doubled my fear,
And wrath at fear. I peered into the void,
And saw, amid the seething of the mist,
A dark hand rise from a malignant cleft
To drag me down—whereat I broke away

And climbed the topmost peak, and lo, the storm
Grew from the seaward. Clouds, like galleons armed,
Loomed large, and larger grown, usurped the sky ;
But at a loftier level, furled their sails,
Dissolved, and downward rolling, overhung
The mountain ranges like a sloping roof,
From whose vast eaves prone fell gray sheets of rain,
Whitening the gorges ; then a thunder peal,
Quick on a venomous flash that closed my eyes,
Crashed like two strokes of Thor's great hammer down
On the anvil of the earth, and echoing, filled
The hollow caverns of the hills with roar
On roar ; at which the North-west wind awoke,
With misty hair outstreaming, and his breast
Gray with the rains wrapt round him, and enraged,
Rushed on the plain ; but I, rejoiced to find
Movement and life again in Nature, laughed aloud,
And all my dread departing, cried, ' Blow, wind,
Carry the fruitful rain to all the earth,
Trumpet my love to all the clouds of Heaven.'
And then the thunder crashed once more, and borne
On wings of storm, I fled adown the ridge,
And found sweet shelter in my maiden's arms.

All night the tempest raged, and in the morn,
Huge trees were felled, the garden wrecked, sea-drift
Salted the wind. The streams whelmed o'er their banks,
Bending the brushwood to their yellow race,
And roared their answer to the gale ; but we,
To whom a storm had often been a friend,
Went through the woods that waved like corn, and heard
As if a bellowing sea surged overhead,
So thick the trees ; but all the sodden paths
Were strewn with boughs on which the leaves held fast
Each in its hollow sheath.

‘Sorrow,’ I said,
‘To see the natural work of Winter’s sword
Done on the youth of Spring’—but she in whom
The wind had kindled a great fire of life,
Laughed at my sentiment, and cried—‘Come, climb
The naked, wind-swept edge above the wood ;
I love the storm, and when his reckless hand
Has loosed my hair, and his wild wings are furled
Around me, then I think some northern God,
Bolder and rougher than fair Venus’ son,
Has sent no Zephyr, but a Sea-King’s wind
To bear a quicker Psyche to his arms.

Yet, if your heart be true, there is no fear ;
Great love can conquer gods ; and it may be,
'Twill pleasure you to hold me to your breast
Against these rude adventurers from the North.'

Come then,' I said, and on the showery ridge,
Standing together in the torrent wind,
I held her close, and saw her wild soft eyes
Grow satisfied, and on her lips the smile
Of inward joy ; whereat the Norway God,
Angry with ill success, sent lashing hail,
And gusts, edged like the sword that bit the stone
In Sigmund's story, so that she I loved
Flung her white hand on high, and cried ' Adieu !
Your wooing is too bitter, God of storms,
'Tis softer on the heart of my true Love.'
So to the Hall, where in her father's room,
He, wearied with a dull day spent at home,
Sleeping a childlike sleep—we hunted through
The prints, the coins, the china cabinets,
The jewels, graven stones, and tapestries,
The robes and mirrors, silks and old brocades ;
Books, the illuminator's golden hand
Made precious with the hues of ocean ; till

Within a deep recess silent we watched
The ancient room, in changing firelight, glow
With shadow and with colour. Then she said—
'Now sing me this day's song, and let it tell
Of all the lovely things you give your maid
Because you love their beauty, and love her.'
And so I sang, with lowered voice, this Song—

v

Maiden, in the happy morn
When your gracious life was born,
Aphrodite's lovely grace
Wandering, found her dwelling-place.
Yet since Art should ever tend
Close on Beauty, her true friend,
I will give you far-brought things
From the treasuries of Kings.

Woven wonders of the loom,
Glow of gold, and purple gloom,
Made when Passion's shuttle fled
Through the wise contriver's head.

Deep brocade that Titian drew,
Sown with orient pearls like dew
In the Sun ; and lace inwrought
With a love-sick maiden's thought.

Pearls the diver in the main
Daily risks a life to gain,
Diamonds the stars eclipse,
Rubies red as Hebe's lips
With the kiss of Hercules,
Great green emeralds, green as seas,
Sapphires where mid-ocean's blue
Fled and hid itself for you.

Graven gems Sicilians made ;
Phœbe hunting in the shade,
Daphne flying from Apollo
Through the wild Thessalian hollow,
Ariadne weeping sore
On the lonely Naxian shore,
Aphrodite shell-enfurled,
Born to charm and slay the world.

Here's a necklace Egypt prest
When the worm sucked at her breast ;
On its jewel, deep-cut, see
The dark face of Antony !
Take these sandals, with gold hem,
Atalanta raced in them ;
Wear this veil that Peredur
Gave the maiden of the moor.

See this girdle fold on fold,
Edged with heavy-tasselled gold ;
On its silken surface sheen
One who had an Empress been
Broidered in her exiled state
All the story of her fate ;
Year by year she wrought at it,
Every stitch with tears was wet.

Take this Fire-Drake of gold,
Made so fine in Byzance old
By a Norseman smith approved
For the Princess whom he loved ;
Twine it round your impatient hair,

It is lissom as a snare ;
O'er each temple rest its claws,
A fire of opal in its jaws.

These are gifts of wealth and art,
But you need them not, Sweetheart !
In your breast the Urim shine
That make womanhood divine ;
Faith and Love and Hope are set
In your youth's wild coronet.
Why should you have gems or dress ?
Unadorned, my Happiness.

At which I ended ; but a mischief flew
Into her eyes, ' 'Tis pretty, yes,' she said,
' But the last verse ! I think I know the line—
" Beauty when unadorned, adorned the most ;"
A little time-worn is your compliment !
Moreover, Sir, I love to be adorned,
As the Heaven loves the stars, I love fair things.
But where are they ? The necklace Egypt kissed,
The veil of Peredur, the sandals worn

By Atalanta? Give them me, and woe
Be yours, if, faithless, you have mocked me now
With false imaginings; nor do I see
The Norseman's coronet. What, dumb, still dumb!
O easy promiser of gifts that lie
Only in Fancy's cabinet.'

Then I

Who knew her pleased, and watched the laughter dance
Like troops of nut-brown fairies in the tarns
Of her full eyes, replied—'You have them all,
I gave far more when first I saw your face,
And loved you!' 'Ah,' she said, 'is it so? Why then,
I have them all, and you their maker! Dear,
Your song was charming. See, the wind has passed,
And in the quiet the sedge-warbler sings,
Grateful to night and silence; Heaven is clear,
The moon is bright above the glen, enthroned
In peaceful majesty; one sound alone,
The loud continuous roar of water, heard
Through the still trees, tells of the storm departed.'

Then hushed in changing happiness she laid
Her head upon my breast and slept awhile;
And innocent dreams, like pleasant waters, flowed

Through the sweet woodland of her heart, until,
Waking, she smiled to find herself enfolded
Close in my arms. 'I dreamt of this,' she said,
• 'My shelter and my rest for evermore.'
So rising, shook off slumber like a robe,
And leaning o'er the window bar, looked out,
Watching the night. 'Peaceful,' she said, 'peaceful
As passion when its doubts are dead.

To-morrow

The earth, the air, the sunlight will be new,
Washed with the rain, and you shall go with me
To the great sea-cape we could not reach to-day,
And look across a thousand leagues of ocean
Less infinite than love! No lonelier place,
More wild with rock and grass, is near my home ;
And there, though I shall weep for parting's sake,
Our last romantic day shall live in joy,
In beauty, and in splendour of farewell.
But come, and I will sing the song you made
When first you knew me, and believed that I
Was as a feather in a changeful wind.'
So, standing in the windowed nook, her face
Radiant with inward light, and her soft eyes

Full of the joy of music and of love,
She sang, and though the song was light as air,
My heart cried out—‘O take her in your arms.’

‘Last night sang the nightingales,
Jenny darling, would you know
What they sang?’—‘I cannot tell,
Leonard, ’tis so long ago.

I have heard so much since then ;
Henry, passing by this morn,
Scythe upon his shoulder laid,
Saw me standing in the corn ;

Have you heard the larks, he said,
Singing songs from cloud to cloud ?
Jenny, they have seen your eyes,
Flash, and therefore they are proud.

Then at noon, the thrush was clear,
Joyous as a summer breeze ;
John came by, and swore the bird
Had seen me midst the apple-trees.

And he sings, 'twas so he said,
That your cheek is softer far,
Clearer, rosier, sweeter touched
Than the apple-blossoms are.

So, the songs of yesterday
How can I remember, Sir?
And besides, last night the birds
Wanted an interpreter!

But this eve, they sing again :
Take me, Leonard, on the wing ;
Come to-night, and in the porch
You may tell me what they sing.'

She ceased ; I kissed her hand that glowing lay
Like a rose-petal on her shimmering dress ;
And she smiled graciously, the Queen of song,
The Queen of love ! ' Was I,' she said, ' so light
When first I met you ? Yes it may be so ;
But your true love has changed me ; I am now
One only, mistress of one heart alone,

Mastered by one alone ; only one voice
Makes my heart beat, only one thought
Fills all I do, my music and my dreams ;
'Tis much to say, yet it is all the truth,
Good-night, sweet sleep and sweetly dream of me.'

Next day the sunlight rained upon the world,
And in the afternoon we reached the cliff
Where underneath majestic Ocean rolled
His voice profound. The long Atlantic waves,
Sapphire and crystal hills, one after one,
Broke, wearied with their voyage from the West,
And their foam flew, like white sea-birds in flight,
Above the black-beaked reef. I looked at her,
Expecting pleasure in her eyes, but cloud
Veiled their clear darkness ! 'Why,' I said, 'is life
Touched with a drift of gloom ? In this gay wind,
Bathed in the sunlight, and before us spread
Like bright eternity the sea—I feel
The king of all the world. But if you turned
Your heart from me, this king would die of sorrow.'
'Speak not of death,' she answered, 'for that cause
I hate the restless and devouring sea !

How many lovers are entombed therein,
And not a voice has told their place of rest ;
No swallows flit above them in the spring,
No tender hand for them shall plant the rose.
I love the kindly earth, and when I die,
To sleep where heather-bells shall toll my dirge—
But think not of it, 'tis a passing mood,
The sea has many phases, so have I ;
And now, deep in this rock-encompassed hollow,
O'erflowed by the river of wind that bends the grass,
Sit with me, sing the song I bade you make.'
So I began and sang the place and hour.

VI

When the evening's cloak of gray
Fell in shadow round the day,
In our love-awakened ear
Nature sang her lyric clear—
Now it seemed a happy child
Sang it, then a wizard wild,
Then a great God in it quired ;
Who could hear it uninspired ?

We have heard it when we stood
On the sea-cliff's solitude,
And the glorious wind, whose motion
Streamed o'er leagues of lonely ocean,
Rushing by us in a flood
Poured its music through our blood ;
Constant, fresh and pure as when
It blew upon the first of men.

Then we knew its mightiest mood
In the deep waves' multitude ;
And by close embrace of thought
Folded like a rose, were wrought
Into passion more supreme
Than the senses ever dream,
But which yet contains the whole
Of the senses in its soul.

In that keen pure atmosphere
Lived the love that casts out fear !
Nature in its light was known,
The great God became our own ;

And we saw the perfect soul
Each shall be, when, in the Whole,
Man and Nature are made one
In the universal Sun.

At the last the Power that sings
In the mother-heart of things
Bore us on its wings unfurled
Into that fair-meadowed world,
Where the great Ideas move,
Making Forms that men may love ;
And the Muses on their hill
Sing around Apollo still.

In its garden, as we walked,
We met Love who wisely talked ;
His bright, ruby wings were wet
With the dew of Himalet.
On our hearts he shook this dew !
'That was stored,' he said, 'for you,
On the day that I was born,
And you shall never be forlorn.'

She heard, and conversed with her thoughts alone,
As grave as she was gay ; then laid her hand,
Softer than falling rain, upon my hair ;
' All love,' she said, ' of sense or spirit dwells
In that ideal land, and, exiled thence,
Is no more love. O could it ever be,
That you should hold me in your arms or thought,
Without ideal joy—may all your love
Die in that moment utterly, as mine
Would die of sorrow worse than the sorrow of death.
For this, I love your lyric ! It shall be
Thanked for in silence ; kiss me, and hold my hand,
And look upon the glimmering of the Sea !'

We were close-curl'd within a grassy seat,
Among the castled rocks ; far, on our right,
Spread the great ocean surface, on our left,
The folded hills and vales ; and towns and towers
Plunged to the waist in woods ; and villages
O'er whose red roofs the Church spires, now all gold
In the full sunset, rose like steady flames
From the altar of the earth. Beneath our feet
The wild grass moorland fell from ridge to ridge,
And silence dwelt in it, silence that Nature

Keeps in the evening hour ;—her prayer before
She sleeps, at rest in God. But on this scene
We scarcely looked, for o'er the tumbling sea
The sun had set in wild magnificence,
And left his glory among clouds that rose,
Dome piled on dome, and wall on wall, and tower
Succeeding tower, edged with red gold above,
And all their whirling volumes underneath
Purple, incensed with angry rose, whence fell
Flame-flakes, and goutts of crimson on the sea—
As if within their rolling spheres the blood
Of great angelic battle had been spilt.
But where the sun had sunk, the mountainous mass,
Cloven in twain, disclosed a sea-paved gorge,
Through which, as through an expanding pass, we saw
The distant fields of Heaven, gold and pearl,
And in the upper azure, all alone
The evening Star, that seemed the thought of God
Which, o'er the wild waves of the world, apart,
Watched from Eternal Peace and said—' Be still.'

And then I looked at her, and saw her eyes
Filled with unfallen tears, and knew she felt
The spirit of my thinking—yet, so fair she was,

In this her passionate union with the awe
And majesty of loveliness, that I
Forgot all things in her, and silently
Took her within my arms, and she upraised
Her face to mine, and we were lost in love.
No word was said, but darkness grew apace,
And we were wakened by a Shepherd's cry,
And the wild bleating of a flock of sheep,
That underneath us, near a moorland pool,
Were driven by barking dogs into the fold.
A solitary place, and sounds that made
The solitude more deep. The lonely moon,
Climbing the dark-ridged mountain, looked on us,
And lit the sweet impassioned face I loved,
Bidding us homeward. Hand in hand we went.
'Tis our last day,' she said ; 'twas all she said.

That night we lingered late. Her father who
Remembered his own youth, left us, and sought
The lofty tower, whence, through black seas of space,
He searched and mapped the island Nebulæ,
And found repose in knowledge from the pain
Love, vulgarised for ever, wrought in him

Long since, when disillusion like a fire
Burnt to dead dust the ideal of his life,
And left him scornful of the past, and full
Of wonder at the woman he had loved.

Henceforth he sailed love's seas no more ; all women
Seemed pretty pictures to his careless eyes,
Built of the flitting rainbow ; yet he kept
A gracious heart and trust in humankind ;
Loving to see love, though he could not love.
So smiling now at me, ' Farewell,' he said,
' You leave too early for a man who lives
More with the stars than the sun ; but you love
well,

And she, my child, loves you ! Before I die,
I wish to see you happy, O make haste ;
Settle your weary business, come and live,
Husband and wife, with me, before I pass
Beyond my well-loved stars, or it may be
To voyage midst them, touching now at one,
Now at another, of their shining shores,
Like some slow sailing ship that at its will
Visits the many-clustered isles that gleam
Upon the blue Pacific ; so, good-night.'

With that last word, and with a glance, half mirth,
All love, upon his girl, he sought his stars ;
And I, who swiftly turned, saw where she stood,
Clad all in flowing white, beside the keys
Where her hand rested. Sweet and shy her look,
And her eyes lifted, like the wing of a bird
In rapid flight, to mine ; then seeing me
Come near, and on my face the marriage thought
Her father spoke, she would not wait for words,
But broke into the gallant loving verse
That Henri Quatre sang to Gabrielle
The day he went to war—‘ O sweetly sung,’
I said, and kissed her lips. ‘ A brave Adieu,
And mine its spirit till that far-off day
When Christmas bells shall ring our wedding chime :
Snow on the ground, and summer in our souls.’

‘ Alas,’ she said, ‘ how happy we have been ;
And now ’tis gone. Would it were come again !
Too far away is Christmas. Men, I think,
Live only with the future or the past,
But for the woman, joy and pain are shut
Within the moment. I must say, “ Good-bye,”
And life is gathered to that little point ;

Parting is all. What shall I do to-morrow ?
No one to love me, no one to torment
With freaks of fancy, none to play upon,
As I play on my instrument and wake
What tune I will, no one to dream of me
And tell his dreams at morning, none to make
The birds and flowers sing songs of love to me ;
No one whom I can ravish with a smile
Or kindle with a frown, none, none for whom
I can take all that Nature makes and is,
And filling it with me, pour the whole life
And love of me and it into his heart.'

'O Love,' I cried, 'fear not, for you have done
All you desire, and more ! Nature and you
Have but one life ; all that I love in her
I love far more in you. Whate'er she does
You seem its soul ; but most of all I keep,
Enshrined for worship in my heart of hearts,
Your perfect womanhood that is my pearl ;
Sweet, bright and pure, serious and wise in thought,
Noble and quick in feeling, gentle-hearted,
Daring and gay yet passionate in love,
The very inspiration of a man,

Thrilling through all his life with fire and light,
With beauty that gives birth to beauty—love
That still creates for me new worlds to love.'

'Why then I have not wrought in vain,' she said,
'I am content; in truth I think no woman
Had ever lover trustier, and more gay
With love's sweet imaging; my week was happy,
My songs were fair and good, and if I seemed
Impatient—think, O dearest, that desire
For that far Christmas Day disturbs my heart,
And then you will forgive.'

And when I saw

Her eyes that brimmed with tears, and felt my heart
Beat loud and fast, and on my lips a cry—
I knew the most passionate home of love and joy
Bordered the land of sorrow and of death.
'Sing to me, sing,' I said, 'let music speak
How I loved you, and you have deigned to love.'

'Yes, I will sing,' she said. 'Do you remember
The verses that you wrote in Italy,
When first we knew our love? You left me here,
And went for work to Venice; on your way,
Night overtook you at a country inn,

And there you made this song. It told your love,
And every word it said was true of mine.'

Again I hear the Italian bird,
And full the stars, and soft the night,
The waterfall's sweet voice is heard,
Unseen, but sounding from the height.
The Spirits of the wind that breathe
Delight, like life, from glen to glen,
Awake the sleeping woods beneath,
And soothe them into rest again.
O deep the love, the enchanted calm,
That glows and kindles, until all
The living earth is bathed in balm ;
And woods and winds, night, waterfall,
All the world's melody,
Are thine, dear Italy.

South wind, be winged with my desire,
Bear through the night to her my dream,
Sing of my love, ye starry choir,

Soft in her ear—woods, night, and stream,
Mingle your music in her heart ;
 Until my voice be in her sleep,
My presence make her life apart,
My longing make her longing deep.

 Come Thou, this world is all thy own,
 Languid and wild, and soft and strong !
Come, when thy arms are round me thrown,
 I'll gain and lose the passionate song
 We sang together, you and I,
 But not in Italy.

Then singing still, and rosy with her love,
She opened the great window, stepping forth
On the stone terrace, where the flowers filled
With scent the ambrosial air, and took my hand,
And laid her love and sorrow on my breast.
The moon was pale, soft circled with a haze
Of rainbow colours ; few were the stars, and faint,
Veiled with thin vapour, thinner than a dream
Remembered from deep sleep. Stillness and love
Filled the majestic night ; the lightest sound,

The stirring of the birds within their nests,
The falling of a leaf upon the grass,
The very moving of the moon through space,
Seemed heard,—so silent were our hearts.

‘The woods,

The world,’ she said, ‘have fallen asleep in love,
And so will we; Good-night! we meet to-morrow.’

The dawn came blurred with mist, and flaws of wind
Blew, bringing rain, but she, for whom Heaven’s grie-
Imaged our own, came with me to the gate,
And clinging to me, kissed me, crying out,
‘I will not let you go.’ Beneath her hood
Her sweet face gleamed, wet with the rain and sorrow
And oh! I have forgotten what we said,
Nor know I how we parted, but I know
Long, long the kiss with which we said Farewell.

THE CROFTER'S WIFE

WHERE is your Father, my child, this fierce and roaring
night?

Is this the month of June, when the wind should be soft
and light?

We have come to the end of the pier—crouch under the
wall of stone,

and pray, in the pause of the gusts, that God may not
make us alone.

Thirty days on the herring-banks, to search the seas for
our bread,

and I know not, child, if the man we love be alive or
dead!

The stars and the moon have seen him, and it may be
they see him no more;

drifted out of sight in the ocean, or flung in some
cave of the shore.—

Effie, my heart is afraid — nor am I the only poor wife ;
Husbands and fathers, as dear as ours, are battling for life,
Where the north-west gale and the waves are hunting
the souls of men !

See Maisie and Jean have come down, and the women
from the glen.

O the white horses ! how fiercely they leap where the
moonshine is bright ;

Is that the loom of a sail, is that the lugger's light ?

For I scarce can see for the rain, and the wind goes by
with a shout,

But the rain and the wind within are worse than they are
without.

And the boy is there—my son—my only son that I love,
Not better, my darling, than you, but he came like a
dove

To my bitter heart, when my father and brother sank in
the seas,

In the storm, twelve years ago, that wasted the Hebrides.
He was born, and my sorrow was hushed ;—yet I thought
I should break my heart

When the boy would go with the boats. “ I will take,”
he said, “ my part

In my Father's life."—But I pressed down my pain—I
thought of our clan,

For 'tis better a Lindsay should die, than her son should
not be a man!

Look out, my child, is there nothing?'

‘No, Mother, nothing but waves,
Tossing in snow-ridged hills, and falling in thundering
caves.

But the night is warmer now, though the wind is so
dreadful and high,

And the rain is passed; and the moon and God are still
in the sky.

Lay your head on my breast, lie quiet; your eyes are
sleepless and wild;

Close them, and tell me the tale of the years when I was
a child.

Speak, it will pass the time, let me hear of the gladness
and woe,

For now I am strong and sixteen, and I think I ought to
know.'

‘The year you were born, my child, was a battle with
despair;

For the herring had gone away, and the nets on the
shore were bare ;

We had ploughed and sown in the Spring, and we hoped
to reap the corn,

But the rain fell night and day, and before the summer
was born,

The roots had rotted and died, or were washed, with
the earth, to the strand,

And all the potatoes were black, and smelt like a plague
in the land.

But we starved along in the hope that the fish would
come in June,

And the boats came back, Effie—as empty and clean as
the moon !

Silent and stern were the men, and the women wailed on
the shore ;

But our people were brave, my child, and we loved one
another the more.

I cannot tell how we lived ; we were nought but skin and
bone ;

Yet better bestarved to death than live with a heart of stone ;

Stone was the heart of the laird, for lest we should trouble
the grouse,

He forbade us to draw the weed, and the heather to
thatch the house,

Or the cow to feed on the hill. This is their ancient
creed

By which they ravish the poor, but a fire shall devour
their greed.

And the rain had ceased for a month or two, and we
stacked the peat,

And saved some straw, and oats for ourselves and the
fowl to eat.

But the winter came with October, and out of the north
one night,

With bolted fire and hail, a hurricane roared in its flight,
And grew, till it rushed, like a wall, across the field and
the hills,

And ruined the works of men ; and the sheep were slain,
and the rills

Rose into torrents of foam !—Our hut had been blown
away

But that it was nooked in the rocks—In vain we had
striven to pray,

For the howl of the wind and the dashing of hail were
never withdrawn,

And we sat by the quenched hearthstone, and lightless,
longed for the dawn.

Sometimes a pause would come, and between the gusts
it was still,

And we listened and heard the stones that fell from the
scarp of the hill,

And the waters that shrieked in the glens, and the
thundering ocean hurl

Mountains that crashed on the reefs, till the island shook
like a girl.

A storm of storms, my child—and when we went forth
in the morn,

The sea for a mile was covered with straw, and the peats
were torn

From the stacks, and scattered and drenched. We had
nought for the winter fire,

And our sheep was killed by the hail, and the cow was
dead in the byre.'

'O Mother, I wonder you lived, and were you troubled
with me?

But now I am able to help; lie still in my arms. The
sea

Is not so flecked with the foam, and the wind is not so
loud.

Father will soon be at home ; and our boats come back
like a cloud

Of birds to their rock—But tell me the rest ; the dawn
is near,

And the star by the moon grows pale.'

‘ Effie, I hope, and fear ;

But in my distress I cry to the Lord, and He will be kind ;
And you have been strength to my heart this night in the
hungry wind.

You were comfort that dreadful day, your prattle was like
sweet air,

And it seemed, if a child could smile, that we should not
despair.

But worse than the storm was at hand, for the factor
came and swore,

He would have the rent or we should sleep with the fox
on the moor ;

And your Father told him our sorrowful tale, and begged
for delay,—

“ The laird wants the land,” he said, and he would not
give us a day ;

“Pay in a week or I burn the house,” and he left us half-
mad ;

Shivering, sleepless, starved, no meal and no milk to be
had,

No fire shone on the hearth, and the rain came through
the roof.

Then Jamie cried in his wrath—“The Lord God stands
aloof,

He has forsaken the poor, He is only the God of the
rich ;

The wicked die old in their beds, but the good are slain
in the ditch ;

We are hunted to death, like the brock and the otter in
the glen ;

The castle is spared by the storm, but not the fisher's den.”

Effie, 'twas wrong of your Father to speak against the
Lord,

But he was maddened and hungry, and the people were
driven too hard.

Not even the gifts of the storm were ours—for they claimed
the wood

Tossed on the shore, and their tithe from the kelp—They
would claim our blood,

And our tears, could they make them gold.—A whale
had been caught on the rocks

And lay dead on the beach—It was light and food for
our folk—But the fox

Of the Law stole in, and laid his paw on the gift of the
gale,

And the Crown and the Laird, like two curs, fought over
it tooth and nail,

Till it rotted away and the island stank—Your Father
was wrong ;

But the landlords for greed have murdered men—O
Lord, how long !

My mother was forced from her home on the blessed
Christmas Day,

When the trees were snapped with the frost, and the birds
dropped dead in the bay.

She was old, and she sank in the snow—I remember her
words as she died—

“They have shorn the men like sheep, and the widows
are crucified.”’

‘’Twas murder, Mother.’

‘Aye, child ; and we too had suffered the like,
Turned out like worn-out dogs to freeze to death in a dike ;

Had not my brother in India remembered me far away,
And when the factor came, we had the money to pay.
He snarled, for he wanted the land, but the rent paid a
dinner the Laird

Gave to his friends on the moor ! But little the rich folk
cared

That the game they shot were our lives. I wonder they
had no fears

To eat and to drink, for they ate our flesh, and drank
our tears.

Since then, we have battled on, and life would be empty
of joy,

Were it not for the love I feel for Jamie, and you, and
the boy.

And the Friend of the poor, Himself so poor, has taken
my hand,

And He leads us all, at last, to rest, in the rentless land ;
Sometimes I wish, my child, I were hushed in His arms
for good—

Effie, I'm weary ; watch while I sleep ; draw closer my
hood.'

'No, Mother, sleep no more, there is fire above the
peaks ;

The storm is gone, the air is sweet, the morning breaks ;
The sun is soaring up with a great archangel's eyes,
And his hair, like ruddy flame, is blown across the skies ;
The glens are brightening fast, the purple clouds are cleft,
And a torrent of gold pours through, and is crimson to
right and to left.

The tumbling waves have a crest of fire, Mother, arise !
O why are the women running, and what are those happy
cries ?

Is it they—is it they ?'

'O Effie, thank God, thank God ! See the boat
Comes in like a living thing, afloat, with the foam on its
throat ;

There, round the point, eager for home—Who's that by
the sheet

Waves his cap ? Your Father ! The boy in the bows
has leaped to his feet,

And the boat rides low, full of fish—We are saved ; it is
food and light,

The rent, and the land, and a roof, and warmth in the
winter night !

And there are the rest together, and flying like birds in a
flock,

Safe to their home from the sea, from the fog, and the
wind and the rock.

God maketh the storm a calm, and they are glad when
they rest.

But Jamie was first of them all, and my heart is so loud
in my breast,

That nothing will still its noise but his arms around me
thrown ;

Come, girl, let us kindle the fire, and ready the food for
our own.

Run, Effie, run—I follow—The night hath its pain,
But joy in the morning cometh, and sunshine after rain.'

THE SEMPSTRESS

'So you return at last, John, it has been a weary
time ;

Five long years since you went for work, to a southern
clime.

And you have enough for a home, enough, you say, for
two ;

'Tis too late—the years have told, I am not the girl you
knew.

The cheek is worn that you kissed; and the lips you
thought so red,

Are white as the shroud I wrapped round my pretty
Mary's head ;

And the burning in my heart has robbed the light from
my eyes—

Bone-starved, and so long alone, there is nothing in me
to prize ;

I should think I were dead and laid in the earth, were it
not for the pain,
But I lie in my life like a grave, I shall never rise
again.'

'O Ellen, though you were old, you would still be a girl
in my eyes,
Love looks with the heart ; and the voyaging sea and the
blowing skies
Will round your cheek again, and the roses come back
to your mouth,
And your youth be born afresh, in our sunny home in
the South.
I love you, my darling, so much, that were you laid in
the tomb,
My will should pierce, like the voice of God, to the heart
of its gloom,
And bring you back to my kiss. Take it now, it will
heal your pain ;
It is warm with the life of love ; we shall never part
again.
And sit you down and quiet your hands, for they shake
like a leaf ;

Nay—give them to me—I will hold them fast, and tell
me your grief;

Tell me of Mary's death; tell all; it will soothe your
heart—

The sorrow that slays the soul, is the sorrow that sobs
apart.

Love is the Shepherd of sorrow, and Love shall lead you
where

The music of his streams is forgetfulness of care.'

'That is tender to hear of, John, but I cannot feel it yet;
It were sweet to be rid of pain—but I do not wish to
forget.

Better the pain where love lives, than the joy he has left
alone.'

'My Ellen, remember your love—but your pain I will
make my own.'

'You did not make it yours! The years went by, and I
heard

Nothing from you; four hopeless years—and never a
word!

I thought you dead, and wept ; and I prayed to see your
ghost.

I dreamed you false, and I sickened ; why were you
silent, why lost,

When my heart was the haunt of despair?—I will not
tell you my tale,

Till I know that no other woman has made your love to
fail.'

‘ Ellen, not mine the fault—I have loved, I have loved
you alone,

And I had died, but I dreamed, every night; that you
were mine own.

Shipwrecked in South Pacific; I lived for three years
enslaved,

And escaped by a wonder of God, and the comrade
whose life I saved

Grateful, has made us a home. But I did not wait, I
came,

With a heart that outstripped the wind, and a hope like
‘the pillar of flame,

As fond as a bird to his nest, as fast as the ship could
drive,

To find my love, and I find her at last, thank God,
alive.'

'Thank God! I thank Him at last. I thank Him that
you were true.—

Do you remember the day you left, and the clouds, and
the blue

Of the summer sky, and the seat beneath the beech, and
the stream

That bent the reeds as it ran, and the music and the
dream?'

'Yes! and your parting words. "I am yours, I will
wait," you said,

"While the river runs, so runs my love," and you took
my head

In your hands, and kissed my mouth—and the ivied
tower struck seven—

Weeping, I fled. O kiss me and tell me that I am for-
given.'

'There is nothing, John, to forgive. I will kiss you
with all my heart.

But oh, my poor boy, we have suffered, it was wrong of
us to part.

For my Father died the year that you left, and we could
not manage the mill,

And we drifted to London, Mary and I, and we drifted
for ill—

Lonely and sad was the mighty town, and the roar and
the crowd

Deafened and crushed our lives ; and then, like a gather-
ing cloud

Which, small as a hand, arises at first from the edge of
the plain,

And climbs, till it blackens the Heaven, and brings forth
the fire and the rain—

Trouble arose, and rained and thundered on us like a curse,
And work grew less and less and our lodging worse and
worse ;

Till at last we came to this court, and wrought with the
needle for life,

Nay, for death,—for the women drop dead like flies in
this desperate strife,

Sobbing and panting for breath, and never a moment for
rest,

With palsyng fingers and burning eyes, and a sword
within their breast—

Twelve hours we sewed for a shilling a day—a penny an
hour,

To pause was to starve and die ; or to live on the streets
and cower

With shame at the public-house doors, and drink the
wages of sin

In the dens that are open all day when the churches are
locked within.

We had neither light, nor air, nor a chance of wholesome
food,

And no clean water to wash with, and none to drink
that was good,

And not a hope of a dwelling but this—like a wild beast's
lair ;

But of drink, to tempt us to death, the Law gave us
plenty to spare.

Half of the people drank hard, and the night was a time
of dread ;

One public-house at the foot of the lane, and one at its
head,

Our Alpha and Omega, John, instead of Jesus Christ,

Where poverty, madness, disease and famine and lust
 kept tryst,

And tore out the hearts of men. We lived our life in
 hell ;

We who had breathed sweet air, and walked in the daisied
 dell—

You remember it, John? It was there I first thought
 that you loved me ! But now

I had given a world to have felt the river breeze on my
 brow.

And the little flower we reared could not bear it, and
 died like a child,

And our linnet from home would not sing : and Mary
 grew piteous and wild ;

She said that the sound of the mill and the splash of
 the water-wheel,

And the murmur of willow-trees and the pigeons that
 cooed for the meal,

Were the guests of her dreams, and she smiled in her
 sleep, but always the dream

Broke, when she saw her Father stand on the bridge
 of the stream,

Weeping, and waving his hand, as if he were far apart—

And she woke to cry in the morn, but I kept these things
in my heart.

Only sixteen, and too fair to live without hopes and joys,
In the dirt and the darkness and strife, with crime and
in sleepless noise.

Tempters to sin beset her, the devils that haunt the
land,

But they failed with her, for my child was too pure to
understand.

Yet she had her little hour of tender and noble love,
And I am grateful for that, and she is with him above—
Near us he lodged, and wrought at the loom a silken
web,

Steady, and clean, and young, a Frenchman, and gay in
the ebb,

And the flow, of life—and friendship grew into love, and
my girl

Tasted the sweetness and passion we knew, till the rose
and the pearl

Mingled their hue on her cheek, and her eyes grew as
soft as a fawn's.

They chatted and sang like birds on a tree, and the sun-
sets and dawns

Saw them together at work, and the boy and my pretty
dove

Found their Eden in this hell—so mighty a wizard is
Love!

“Where are they now?” you ask; and I see the tears in
your eyes.

They are dead! My darling is dead—but there is more
love in the skies.

For the fever that lives in the court and slaughters the
children for play,

Seized on this happy boy and he died on a winter day—
“Adieu, my Mary,” he said, “and come and see me
soon,

For we shall be married in Heaven, in the meadowy
month of June.”

And in June she was gone—“I must keep my tryst,” she
said, “but lay

My poor little body near his—but ourselves shall be far
away.

Good-bye, my Ellen; how good you have been—my
darling, mine own;

How good to have lived, and loved! I am sorry to leave
you alone.

But Ellen, trust on, for John will come back—I can
hear him now

Crying for you, in some lonely place. He is true to his
vow.

Wait, for I wish to look down from the heavenly fields
with joy

On you and your lover together—but I shall be with my
boy.”

Yes, John—take me close in your arms—I have waited
and I have been true

Through silent years that are now like a dream, I have
lived for you ;

Starving and worked to the verge of death ; tried ;
tempted ; alone !

Take me, and keep me, and love me ; I am worthy to
be your own.’

‘ My love, my love, come away ! The winter is over
and past,

Parted too long, afflicted too long, we are one at
last !

Come, we will plant wild flowers where her lover and
Mary sleep,

And pray and kiss by their grave, then think of them on
the deep.

How glad they will be in Heaven! Come, Ellen, come
away,

The ship that shall carry us home is waiting at the quay.'

JUSTICE ·

THREE men went out one Summer night,
No care they had, or aim,
And dined and drank—‘ Ere we go home
We’ll have,’ they said, ‘ a game.’

Three girls began that Summer night
A life of endless shame ;
And went through drink, disease and death,
As swift as racing flame.

Lawless and homeless, foul, they died ;
Rich, loved, and praised the men ;
But when they all shall meet with God,
And Justice speaks—what then ?

· ONE YEAR

O SPRING was young and maids were free,
And buttercups were on the lea,
And Robert and my heart were gay
Under the blossoming of May.

O soft the Summer was and warm,
But round me softer was his arm,
And sweet the wild rose, sweeter still
His kiss upon the lonely hill.

When Autumn and the harvest came,
My heart was sick of grief and shame,
For Robert in the fever died,
And the babe quickened in my side.

But now the Winter wild has come,
The earth is white, and God is dumb ;
There is no more to do but die
Under the ice, my child and I.

O when my grave is growing green,
My Father will forgive my sin,
And Robert on his deathbed said—
'We shall be married when you're dead.'

AMY'S TALE

Mark, who is returning to England, and William, Amy's husband and master of a farm in Massachusetts, talk together in a woodland near the farm, and William tells his friend the story of his wife, and how he won her.

Mark. How sweet within this open glade, whose edge
Outlooks upon the farm, the copses smell,
Full of the primrose and the violet, twined
Like lover's knots, below the hazel-trees !
Their low green roof is interlaced with gold,
Changing as breathes the wind, and thick in the grass
The white starflower and the hyacinth
Like bride and bridegroom stand. The world is wed
To youthful love, yet sorrow is not far ;
For see—along the bank, among the spurge,
The sapling sycamores unfold their leaves
As red as blood—like tragic days in youth.

William. The copse is pretty, but is Nature's own ;
I better like this slope of sheep-fed sward,
Dotted with thorns, and the blue stream that flings
Its arm around my farmhouse on the tongue
Of jutting rock that, midst the willow-roots,
Delays the water to the Fisher's pool,
Where the wise cattle stand, and all my sheep
Drink at noontide—Dame Nature, to my mind,
Needs for her perfect beauty to be wed
To the soul and works of man.

Mark. True, true enough—
But on this sunny day my humour is
More for the copse where Nature has her will.
The lonely man loves Nature's lonely thought.
This farm, the well-taught stream, the deep-grassed meads
Are your own making, and among them breathes
The tender charm of home. 'Twere strange indeed
Did you not love them more than the wild wood ;
But both are beautiful. I go to-night
To find my people and my Father's house,
Where now in Somerset, around the barns,
The orchards flower for leagues—but save for thoughts

That from their source in history fill my land
With a romantic heart, I think this farm
In the New-England woods is just as fair.

William. O Mark, more fair than home to us; for
joy,

Whose flower drooped in England, has again
Bloomed here in Amy's breast. You would not think
That she had suffered trouble;—there she stands,
Near the quaint well the ancient Dutchman carved,
Modest and sweet and true, and on her cheek
Colour more soft than apple-blossoms show,
And eyes where summer skies rejoice to dwell.
You have said farewell to her, and since I go
Three days along the road with you, she spends
The time with Hewitt and his wife. See there!
They have come to fetch her. Wave your cap with me;
You will not see a fairer, wiser face,
Until you meet a girl as dear to you
As she to me.

Mark. Yes, I know that. When first
You came and found me ill, a lonely man,

And soured by barren passions, it was she,
Who, by the conquered sorrow in her eyes,
And the sweet seriousness and settled peace
That breathed from her as odours from a rose,
Filled me with thoughts of the grief of all the world ;
Then stirred in me the sap of life, and now
Sends me to heal the woes from which I fled.

William. The power, Mark, that you have felt in
her

Was gained in pain, upon the edge of sin ;
Pain that a thousand stricken women bear
And do not live to tell of—overwhelmed,
And rolled like stones along the roaring bed
Of the great river of guilt that drowns the poor.
She 'scaped, as it were by chance ; I'll tell the tale ;
Herself has urged it, knowing you were set
To save the sorrowful, and you shall hear
How much I loved her, and in what strange ways,
God gave to me my wife.

Mark. Speak, William, I

Will listen full of love for her and you.

THE TALE

William. My Amy was a seaman's only child,
Who, captain of a lifeboat on the coast
Where Devon turns to Cornwall, served mankind
As, young, he served his country. Moors and winds
Nourished her childhood, and the immortal sea
Her playmate was ; Love sheltered her ; she knew
The storms of heaven, but not the storms of men.
Proud of her Father, by her Mother blest,
And pure as dawn upon the hills of Eden,
She grew untouched by love to grave seventeen,
And for that she was golden-haired, and sweet,
And coloured lovelily, and yet was tall,
And stately in her walking, she was named
The Rose and Lily by the Devon men.

One night alone unmade her. While she slept,
A mighty storm blew roaring from the west,
And in the dark she heard the sound of guns ;
And rose, and saw, through white moonlight and foam,
A black ship strike the reef, and heard a cry
That cleft the sky and stabbed her like a sword.

Then on the beach, she watched her Father launch
The lifeboat, and with eyes and soul attent,
Clung to its fortunes, trembling, praying, thrilled
With courage, fear and joy, till all were saved.
But he who steered the boat, her Father, smit
By a great inward-curling wave, was laid
Dead at her feet, the only quiet thing
Midst raging waves, and wind and storm-blown men.
Weeping they bore him home, but she went first,
And, like a ghost, stood wringing of her hands
Before her Mother, and her face said—Death.
But she, whose life was knit to her husband's life
As ivy to the stones of a gray tower,
Shrieked out and fell, and died before nightfall.
And Amy, orphaned, laid them in one grave
Where evermore they hear the sounding sea.
The fisher-folk who loved her, mourned with her ;
'Stay, make your home with us,' they said, but she
Obeyed her Father's will, and lonely went,
Weeping and wept for by the hamlets round,
To London, to her cousin, grim and poor,
Who, soured by life, envied the girl her youth.
'Work, work, no talk,' she cried—and drove her hard.

The weary days crept on from hour to hour,
Thin poverty with slow-devouring tooth,
Dull labour, turned to gall with harsh reproach,
And dreadful hunger for the love of old,
Preyed on her heart that beat its wings in vain,
Like some wild bird that fallen from the nest,
Dies in the April snow. Day after day
She saw in thought the quiet graves, and heard
The waves repent her Father's death, and wept—
'Home is no more, and I shall never hear
One word of love again'—and then more dark
Fell on her life the city's curse of gloom.
Sea-born, she longed for space, to watch again
The green wave flashing as it turned, or hear
The wind, wet winged o'er leagues of sea and moor,
Rush by her ear—and every night the roar
Of London streets stole into sleep, and changed
To the long surging waters thundering through
The channels of the reef. Then oft she dreamed
That, wandering through the village street, she sought
Her Father's house, but ever as she touched
The garden latch, a strong wind rose, and bore her
Far on its wings into a desert land.

Once only, when a great gale blew, she seemed
To reach the door, and entering in espied
The well-loved room, and saw her Mother singing
A ballad of the coast, who raised her head
To list the wind, then smiled with sweet content,
Seeing her husband safe ; but he with eyes
Filled full of love, a great book on his knees—
Followed another Amy through the room,
Who flitting from the firelight to the shade,
Made supper ready, happy and loved and known,
The Queen of home—and then she wept, and woke,
Hearing her Father's pleasant rough sea-voice
Still in her ear—' Mother, there's not a girl
In Devon that can match our Amy here '—
Dreams that were pain and strength, for all the day
Her Father's spirit, and the power of winds
And waves, and waters of the hills and vales,
And the great sky that arched above her home
Abode with her—and she endured her life.

Sore was the siege that pressed upon her heart,
But work and faith so strongly wrought, that when
Her cousin, after weary illness, died,

And she was left alone in all the world—
Steady, as cliff in the gale, she met her fate.
Hope, like the star whose light leads on the dawn,
And Youth, the Shepherd who beholds it blaze,
Shone inspiration in the little room
She found beneath the roof, and fed with flowers.
And when at night she lit her lamp, she set
Full in its light, like relic in a shrine,
Her household treasure, a fair-modelled ship
Her Father built for her one happy year ;
And when the shadows from its rigging fell
Across her work, she felt him by her side,
And heard him whisper, ' God is love, my child,
And there is One whose care and tenderness
Fail not ; and He was poor, and keeps the poor
Close to his heart.' And so she prayed and lived,
Not without joy—and on the day of Rest
Went, like the happy Devon maid of old,
To pluck the Devon flowers on London hills ;
Or from the breezy edge of Hampstead, where
The pines look out o'er town and vale, gazed forth
To the south-west and sighed, as sigh the pines—
' There lies the land, where I so fain would be.'

At last, through Autumn's miserable rain,
Dark Winter came, icicle-hung that year,
And all her flowers dying in one night
Seemed like a threat of ill, and henceforth Ill
Drew sword on her. Work failed and food and health;
The frost bit deep, the wild wind sang of fear;
Upon her piteous hearth the white ash lay
Untouched. All day and half the night she plied
The bitter needle: Famine and Despair
Stood by her side, and shrieked from hour to hour
Temptation; but she kept the truth, and shone
Pure as Arcturus when it gleams through storm—
But evermore her life was lonelier,
And nakeder her room: at last she pawned
The coverings of the bed itself for food.
That day there fell a heavy snow, and then
A frost, that crept into her veins like sleep,
Warned her of Death.

One thing was left unsold,
And in her agony, with tears that seemed
To weep away all faith, all hope, to tear
Her past out of her breast, to lay again
Her Father and her Mother in the grave,

She sold her ship and thought she sold her heart.
A week of food and fire, of tears and pain,
This dear remembrance gave ; but gave no more,
And then at last, all broken down, she sobbed
To break her heart—'I have been loved, but God
And Man forget me ; I have striven in vain ;
The time is close at hand when I must die.'

While thus she wept, the landlord stormed her room,
'Go, walk the streets,' he cried, 'and earn your bread,'
And drove her from the door ! She wailed and fled ;
The sleet fell fast and pierced her to the bone,
A dreadful fire flamed within her brain ;
She called on death, she thought of sin, and when
She came to the dark stream, her will had lost
Its grip of thought, and she forgot all else
But misery, and crouched her down to die,
Like a wild animal the hunters drive—
And there, I found her—and—I found my wife !
I heard her moan, I did not see her face ;
But pitying a girl so desolate,
Within whose heart and on whose fallen hair
The sleet had frozen, touched her arm and said,

'Who are you? I am sorry for your fate'—
At which, she, trembling, rose, and turned on me
A face so young, so beautiful and wan,
With eyes that from their wasted sockets looked
Such infinite woe to mine, that from that hour
I loved her with the love I bear her now.
'No home,' she said, 'no food: and I must die;
The river calls me; I am all alone—
I, once so loved! My Father, O, my Father!
Sir, will you bring me to him. Take me home.
You will not shame a poor forgotten girl.'

'To shame you were to shame all womanhood,'
I answered, full of passionate first love.
She looked and pierced my soul, and knew me true,
And came with me, all trembling, but she seemed
Lost like a wanderer, who on pathless moors
Has fought so long with winds and whirling snow
That saved, he knows it not—but when that night
She found herself warmed, fed, at peace—my nurse,
A dear old dame that loved her from the first,
Tending her tenderly, she sighed and slept.

Next morn she told her tale. Dry-eyed she spoke—
With white unchanging face, like that sad girl,

Who buried, woke within the uncared-for tomb,
And in her shroud, stunned with strange pain, went forth
Forgotten, through the silent streets of dawn,
To find her doors closed closer than her grave.
I heard her as the Australian miners heard
The English lark, and wept because their loves
And the green lanes of home were far away !
As England to their hearts she seemed to me,
As distant o'er the wandering seas of Hope—
So still, so cold she lived. But I had faith,
And waited, customing her life to mine,
So patience deepened love. All night I dreamed
That I pursued and won her, and by day
Her omnipresence, like creative Love,
Made my heart Paradise wherein I walked,
New-born, among the roses of romance.

Long, long I took her gratitude, but oh—
The air it breathed was not my air. At last
One sunny morn, when in the street near by
A lark sang like an angel on the walls
Of Heaven his rapturous hymn—the happy bird
Thrilled me with courage and I cried aloud,
'Amy, I love you, will you be my wife ?

Give me yourself.' 'Love me!' she cried; 'you love
And you would marry me—me shamed and worn—
You cannot love me, I am starved at heart;
No one can love me in this world again,
All whom I loved are cold, and I unwed,
Shall die, too tired to live unless I sleep.'

Smiling I said—'You shall rejoice and live,
And be the girl of old;' and then I thought—
'The Spring has come, the flowers and air are singing,
Youth fills the earth, and I will take my love
From the dark town, and by her native sea
Restore the childhood to her heart, and heal
My wounded bird with peace and change and love.'

I brought her to her Devon home, and there,
The fountains of the great deep of her heart
Were broken up. When first she saw the moors,
Soft lightning thrilled her and her face awoke.
Trembling, with listening ear and startled eyes,
Like a wild fawn upspringing from the fern,
She rose to her feet, instinct with coming life—
'O what is this?' she cried—'What have you done?'
But when she felt the fresh salt in the wind,
And on it borne the sharp cry of the choughs;

And saw the gray cliffs stand about the cove,
The bridge among the trees, the brawling stream
Fringed with the gardened cottages, the pier
Brown with the nets, and curving like an arm
To embrace the tiny harbourage, and then—
White clouds, and the great glimmer of the sea,
She burst into a storm of tears and sobs
That shook her as a tempest shakes a sail ;
And then I knew her youth and natural love
Were born again. I brought her home that eve.
'I found,' I said, 'your Father's house for you ;
Live in it, it is yours.' Her shining eyes
Filled full and glanced at me, and in their depths
I saw Love rise at last, unconscious yet,
Innocent, young and fair, as Eve of old
When first she smiled and moved the spheres to joy.

The morning broke in sunlight, and a feast,
Men, women, children welcomed her ; from far
And near delighted hamlets came ; the boats
Were decked with green, the village and the pier
Rang loud with songs. 'Lily and Rose' again
She was to Devon men, but most to me !
Not pale or cold that day, but warm and sweet,

New risen from the dead she seemed ; and took
Her homage, blushing like a happy child ;
And I, who never left her, whispered low,
'Hark, how the village cheers, and see the dance ;
What ! is there none to love you left on earth ?'
At which she smiled, and of her own accord
Laid her dear hand in mine ; but I thanked God.

So through the lengthening days of gentle Spring,
May, like a fairy, moving through the lanes
And o'er the lawns, and calling ferns and flowers
Out of their winter grave, she lived and moved,
Herself the fairy of my heart—and what with youth,
And health that filled her like a mountain spring,
And the great love that wrapt her round, and soothed
her,

As the young Summer soothes the world—and sweet,
Wild memories of her Childhood that each day
Brought healing unperceived, and wandering through
Her Father's rooms, and in the garden thoughts
Of her Mother with the flowers, and tears that fell
Soft as the dew upon their grave, and talk
With men who honoured them of old,—she grew
Content with life, and the dark years of pain

Slipped from her as the weary body slips
From the soul at death ; and then I spoke at last.

It was the hour to which the lover turns
With most of longing—when the Star of Love
In sunset's rose and pearl begins to shine,
Peaceful and pure, when the pale sky is still,
And the long labour of the earth is done—
Then all alone, and trembling with our thought,
We lay deep-nested in a grassy combe,
Where the rough hazels wedded with the beach,
And heard the soft discoursing of the sea.
I watched the slow incurving ripple draw
The outline of its edge upon the sand,
And said to Amy—' Look, how beautiful.'
But she had fixed her eyes upon the star,
And in them so divine a light was pure,
That the wild passion in my soul poured forth,
And filled my lips with speech. I told her all,
I fell before her feet, and then—the earth
And Heaven were hushed with me, until she spoke—
' William, you were my saviour, but at last
I have forgotten gratitude in love—
I love you, love you ; take me to your heart.'

But as I heard, the wide world seemed to swoon ;
I think that for the moment I lost sense ;
For she cried out and kissed me and then smiled ;
' Be happy, Will !' she said, ' for we are One.'
No more I spoke, she also spoke no more ;
But when the moon stole round the o'erhanging cliff,
We climbed the path and hand in hand went home.

Mark. O William, Joy becomes in such a tale
The mate of Sorrow, and Romance is born
From their embracing. 'Tis no wonder then
You love each other with so deep a love.
But tell me how it happed your footsteps turned
From England here ; what drove you o'er the sea ?

William. We pledged our troth that night beneath
the stars,
Our feet among the daisies whose sweet thoughts
Hallowed her parents' grave, and kneeling, prayed
Their blessing for our life. The village folk
Made theirs our happiness ; the church was full
When we were wed, the gray-haired pastor smiled
And wept, reading the service, and we heard

The blue sea murmur through the open porch
A deep Amen ; and oft at night, e'en now
So far away, I hear that solemn sound ;
And Amy wakens in the morn and cries,
'The Sea, the Sea'—so mighty is the power
Of that great Creature on the souls of men.

Next day we left the moving of the waves,
And went to London, where the Sea of men
Has wilder wrecks, more desolate outcasts,
Than all Atlantic knows. My practice lay
Half midst the poor, and Amy healed their hearts,
Working with me 'to save,' she said, 'the lives
Of women who endure the pain I knew
In days when God and you delivered me.'
Two years we toiled, but after her first child
Her life was smitten with a slow distress ;
She pined, and oh, my friend, I thought
That God had given but to take away.
Dim memories haunted her, the ancient pain
Closed round her heart ! Again this child of the sea
Drooped in the prisoned air ; sleep went from her,
And when she slept she dreamed that she was lost,
And starved again, and drowned. Night after night

She heard her Father call her piteously,
And saw her Mother wandering evermore
Upon a desolate strand beside a sea
That moaned and wailed—and then, starting, she woke
Trembling and white as moonlight.

All my skill,

And all my love, and her own courage, failed,
And when the babe broke down, I too despaired.
At last, a friend, a doctor like myself,
Who years ago had bought this very farm,
Weary for home, wrote, offering an exchange,
My practice 'gainst his farm. And Amy's sleep
Returned that night with hope, and I, outworn,
Declared the blood of this new Continent
Would send its mighty youth into our hearts.
Therefore I sailed, and ere the year had closed,
Peace, health and happiness became our guests,
And now abide with me and her I love.

But see, the westering sun with hand of fire
Touches the gables and the poplar-trees,
And all the farm is shadow. Let us go,
The Evening star has brightened; say 'Farewell.'

TOGETHER

YES, Dear, 'tis true, the news of war has come,
My country calls me and our happy home
Will miss its master when the evening falls ;
Then you will wish me in your arms, and I
Clasp you, in thought, with mine—Nay, do not cry,
'Tis not your wont to weep when honour calls.

But come into the park and watch with me,
From the wide beech that crowns the rising lea,
The Sun's farewell to river and to bay ;
The place has known our joy, and felt our woe ;
And think how happy we have been, and though
Parting has come that we have had our day.

See, I have brought the scarf you used to wear,
When first I wooed you, round your radiant hair ;
You gave it me the day I won your love.

And I have treasured it like the heavenly pearl ;
Use it this eve, and in the battle's whirl
I'll wear it as a knight his lady's glove.

Do you remember how the West was gold,
That evening when you loosed it fold on fold
And shook it like a banner o'er the lake,
Then kissed and gaily flung it o'er my head ?
'Wear it not only for my love,' you said,
'Wear it for honour and for duty's sake.'

Yes, it is twenty years since then, and we
Have sailed together o'er a changeful sea ;
Once we were shipwrecked, but you held my hand ;
Once we were drowned in sorrow, but you smiled ;
Bade me take courage, and your faith beguiled
The path of effort to a firmer land,

With smiles so tender and with talk so sweet
Sorrow and fate lay conquered at your feet.
And I, too light in joy, too lax in strife,
Gained strength and constancy unknown before,
And lost no brightness, for I loved you more ;
Star that ennobled, comforted my life !

Is it 'too much to say,' and have you won
'Life from my love'? It may be so; the sun
Wins something from the planet—and I know
With me you have been happy. In your eyes
Love never failed to sail his argosies;
Whene'er I come, your cheek begins to glow;

Your kiss, like mine, is warm with passionate thought,
And every day our wedding-day is wrought.
Romance has grown, not withered, and the earth
Is almost fairer than it was in youth;
More memories make it sweeter, and, in truth,
We still can see the fairies and their mirth.

There spreads the beech, a dark and ample shade,
And here the arbour, here the seat we made,
Whence we can view the garden and the Hall.
There are the children playing tennis; they
Know not as yet their father leaves to-day;
How gay their shouting as they strike the ball!

Make keen their interest in the War, and move
Within their hearts, through love of me, the love
Of Country and of Duty to the death.

Blessèd is Peace, and cursèd War, but still
Press its ideals on them—strength of will ;
Presence of mind, the better courage ; faith

In all they fight for ; honour in the strife ;
Endurance ; temperance, the guard of life ;
Obedience prompt and gay ; a happy face
When called to meet with death ; high gentleness
To conquered foes, but sternness none the less
In battle, and in each the tranquil grace

Of one who thinks but scorn of praise or wealth
If all within him be in perfect health.

This was the lesson of your life to me !
What trust you had, what certainty in love,
Bright faithfulness as of the stars above ;
God made your heart as full, as deep as the sea.

Silent, my darling? Nay, I feel your arms
Close round me, and your heart beat grief's alarms.
How full it strikes, as eager and as strong
As when you rode with me, a rapturous bride,
From moor to moor, or down the mountain-side
Raced like the wind the heathery hills along.

Years have not touched your beauty, but fulfilled
Its passionate brightness ; trouble never chilled
Your eyes that do the morning star eclipse.
'That is my love,' you say ; well, if it is,
Lift up your head, confirm it with a kiss.
But see, the sun behind the headland dips

That rounds our little bay. The fishing-town
Huddled beneath the cliff, the sandy down,
The boats at anchor—now are dimmed and drear ;
The shadow falls on them that falls on me,
The shadow of departure ! Come and see
How goes the children's game ; the time is near.

APART

So, Dear, I leave you, loved through good and ill !

And now that death is here, I love you still.

They lie who say that Love is ever old.

Slow beats my heart—yet, if I watch your eyes,

I see the sunset in the low-hung skies,

And the sheep feeding near the mountain fold,

When first, with that wild rush you once loved well,

I threw my arms around you—and the dell

Burst into triumph, and your face was song,

Lit with that soft, swift, unimagined glow,

That none but those you loved can ever know.

Alas, I have not seen it for so long.

Since then, in you breathed all my happiness ;

Long years went by, I could not love you less.

But Nature,—though she made me strong for love,—

Niggard of gifts, withheld the perfect power
To keep your love still constant ; and the hour
Came when the world in you began to move

Like a sweet landscape under a new spring,
And others woke the thoughts I wished to cling
Round me alone ! Ah why protest, why speak,
I think that you were faithful in your way,
But on wild hills apart you loved to stray ;
And when I knew, I thought my heart would break.

But I was silent, for I could not bear
To beg or fight for love. You gave me care,
And help, and trust. You loved my constancy ;
You loved me now and then, as if by chance—
Jealous, you kept me yours, but your romance,
And all your passion slipped away from me.

I do not blame you—have I ever blamed ?
I did not claim you—have I ever claimed ?
It may be had I done so at the first,
I might have held you, but I do not know.
I have been wearied out with all the woe
Of Love that never ceased to cry ‘ I thirst.’

You press my hand, the tears are in your eyes ;
It is too late, dead years cannot arise :
And even now self-pity more than love
Moves o'er your face—Your punishment has come,
Within you all the songs of Faith are dumb ;
Your heart where Love once nestled like a dove

Is cold ; the gracious habitant is gone !
And I, who for starved years have lived alone,
And die this night of long-enduring pain,
Would not exchange with you, for in my heart
Love lives, still young. I chose the better part—
But oh, how sad it was—the strife how vain !

And now I slip my anchor to make sail
O'er uncompanioned seas, and leave no trail—
Another life to find—and other ways.
And you will come, you say, and live with me,
And be mine own—Nay, Dear, that cannot be,
I shall forget you in those new-born days.

In these dim hours when my immortal youth
Has risen to dawning, I have learnt the truth ;
To-night we say 'Farewell,' for evermore.

Through all eternity you shall not speak
One word to me, nor you nor I shall seek
To meet each other on that far-off shore.

Had we had children—then perhaps, but no !
We were apart—our marriage, empty show.
Love's mockery is past—I bid it die !
They neither wed nor are they wed in Heaven,
Therefore on earth be all our debts forgiven ;
Come kiss me on the lips and say Good-bye !

How I have loved you, how I love you yet !
What pain it is ! Thank God, I shall forget.
Nay, do not touch me more. There does not dwell
One spark of passion in your kiss—your hand
Is cold—my house of love was built on sand ;
I cannot bear it—let me go—Farewell.

WHEN HE HAD SPOKEN

AND so you thought I meant it—and you spoke ;
Told in a moment all your heart, and broke
The pleasant dreamland up, snapped short the bow,
Straining the string too passionately, then
Dare to reproach me, as if I made men
So vain, so dull—I'll not forgive you—no !

'Unkind !' you think. No, I shall suffer most !
I lose the unoutlined dreams I loved, a host
Of fancies, brighter far than you can think ;
Love's game of chess is o'er, in which to win
Or lose, it mattered not a pin ;
And the wild joy of walking on the brink.

I'll not forgive you—I have lost too much.
I liked to fancy you might some day touch,
Shyly, my hand—to think your eyes that were

So ignorant once—a simple-minded blue—
Would fill with lightning, and grow wet with dew ;
I loved to fall asleep, and think you there,

Beneath the window, watching if a shade
Should cross the blind ;—and twice, at least, I laid
A rose, crimson and warm as blood, upon
The handle of the gate, and said within—
'There lies my heart—will he know that, and win
To understanding, for I am alone ?'

I made you all ideal, built for you
A new romance each day. I wandered through
Forests where you couched spear and slew my foe—
Gardens in summer moonlight where you told
Your love—enchanted realms of Faerie old
Where we had passionate pleasure, passionate woe.

By night and day, I felt a thousand pains
That thrilled me with keen joy ; I gave the reins
To every image of my love for you,
And yours for me ! And you have ruined this—
Destroyed by speaking all this world of bliss !
Was that true love ? 'Tis false to call it true.

Could you conceive I loved you? What I loved
Was my own vision—all the dreams that moved
My love of loving. They belonged to me;
They perished when you asked for a return!
Could love like mine take form, or touch, or burn?
Forgive! I hate you for your cruelty!

AFTERWARDS

WELL, he is gone, alas, that I am glad ;
But being gone, the world and I are sad !

How could I be so angry, as if I
Had not for months been wishing he would speak,
Longing for certainty. I thought last week
He being silent longer—I should die.

I think I said as much beside the stream ;
I told the tale of one who in a dream

Perished in silence of the wound of love.
If he had spoken then, I might have said
'Yes'—for the eve was sweet, and in me bred
Soft dreams—and far through golden glades the dove

Sent tenderly her voice ; but when he looked,
Lifting his brows, on me, I scarcely brooked

His sudden doubt, his trembling insolent dread

If I were true—but O his love was wise.
He saw the inward coldness in mine eyes,
And drew back shamed, and silent hung his head.

Then I laughed low, and took a violet
Warm from my breast and gave it him, and yet
He would not speak. It angered me, and most
Because he half-discovered what I was ;
So that I flung myself upon the grass,
And bade him go, and felt the world half-lost.

Amazed and sad he left me. Had he stayed,
I might have spared him sorrow, might have played
So lightly with him, that his love had died.
But when he went, my heart grew hot with wrath ;
'He shall repent,' I said, 'and tread the path
Of fruitless love, and I will heal my pride.'

And now my pride is healed I ought to pass
Homeward, as happy as the mountain grass
Bending before the first-born breeze of spring.
I have my will ; he loves me all in all ;
I heard romance and passion in his call—
'Love me, my darling, give me welcoming.'

My day is gained, but was it worth the game,
And why my conquest faintly touched with shame?

How slowly moves his figure through the wood,
A broken pilgrim! Shall I call him back?
And see, he pauses on the upward track,
Beside the stile, and evening's crimson flood

Flows round him like a river round a stone.
What does he think of, now he is alone?

Were I to run and touch him on the arm
And say—'Forgive me, Henry, I repent,'
Would he accept me, think me innocent?

I know not, but I know the singular charm

Which comes, they say, but once, in first love's joy,
Will touch no more the heart of this poor boy;

The pearl of life is dulled for evermore.
He gave his best—the virgin love of youth;
Laughter for love I gave him, lies for truth,

Made him my guest, then pushed him from the door!

Would he were here—for I am sad at heart;
And if he came—ah, should we ever part!

Still at the stile he lingers, shall I call?

Vain, vain ! I know myself—This is not love ;
Only self-pity, self-reproach, I prove,
 Passing regret—He does not count at all !

I must be stormed, not worshipped as divine ;
Who masters, wins me ; he shall say—‘ Be mine,’
 But this soft wooer is no mate for me ;
My lover must have life, command, and fire,
Subdue my mind and kindle my desire,
 And sway me as the tempest sways the sea.

Would He were here ! The night has fallen fast,
And my sad friend has wandered home at last ;
 Gloom in his heart, my scorn within his ears.
I saw him wring his hands before he crossed
The thorn-clad ridge ; his certainties are lost.
 But is't not gain to have no hopes, no fears !

See, where he stood the Evening star is bright,
Alone, a sad and spiritual light,
 Most like his heart, but most unlike to mine ;
I wait my Morning star, O where is he ?
Him whom I know not, but who comes to me !
 Come quickly, come, for I am only thine.

ROME (A.D. 1500)

GREETING to my Lucrezia! Ere the dawn
Had kissed your eyelids, letters from the Duke
Bade me to Ostia, so I may not come
To-night to your embrace, but send these words
To tell you of my heart, and what befell
As I went home, that you may guard our love
Against a traitor lurking in your house.
I have been silent as a star in Heaven,
But Jealousy can hear a silence speak,—
And she has heard our secret. Therefore watch,
Make sharp the keenness of your serpent race,
Double it by the instinctive wit of love,
Search out the spy, and have him stabbed, and flung
Into the Tiber, but before he die
Find out who stands behind him, dagger drawn,

And if it be the man we both abhor,
The coarse Orsini, coarsest of his clan,
Compass his certain death. Be wise and smooth,
Subtle, alluring, honey-tongued, until
You have him in your power ; then strike home ;
And since he loves you, let him know your hate.
Would I could cross my sword with his, and cleave
His heart in twain—but he is old and weak,
And fitter for your hand. Be merciless ;
But that I need not urge—and I will hold
The rest at bay, and keep our love as safe
As stands the Capitol—aye, though I plunge
Half Rome in bloodshed for it. When I think
That but for happy accident last night,
I had been swept by Tiber to the sea,
And felt no more your warm arms round me thrown,
Nor heard again your cry of love, when I
Leap from the window to your heart, nor watched
Slow, indolent pleasure wander in your eyes—
I shiver like a tree when in the spring
It thinks of winter !

Did you dream last night,
Locked fast in slumber satisfied with love,

I was beset by villains?—Did you hear
The clashing of the swords, and Death's hoarse cry?

I left you when the moon, climbing the pines,
Shone full upon your sweet and radiant face
And on your eyes where power weds with love,
As from the terrace edge you waved farewell!—
Trembling at first and blind with joy, I went
Through the black ilex alley where the boughs
Tangled the moonlight, and the statues gleamed
Among the blossomed bay-trees, till I reached
The little grassy theatre we loved,
Where, midst the silent seats, the fountain springs
From a Triton's mouth.—You know the place, for there
Our passion found its voice, and grew to flame,
Flame that will burn when earth shall be no more.
Then silence pleased; but, after silence, song
Filled the soft night with love—and now, once more,
I heard the woodlark's note divide the dark,
Singing the melody it sang that eve.
I stayed my steps, the music drew my heart;
And leaning in the shadow of a pine
Listened the bird—The glittering, tinkling drops,

That made the moonlight in the basin thrill,
And the wild magic of the roses there,
That flung their odour like their branches forth,
Mingled their rapture with my thoughts that strayed
Slowly o'er all the life I've lived with you,
Until my heart was almost faint with love.

At last, I heard the bells smite four, and now
The moon was in the very top of Heaven,
As, issuing from the gate wherein the Spring
The poplar-trees shake down their drifting snow,
I stepped into the shadow-haunted road,
Singing the low sweet song you made for me.
When suddenly, being all awake with love,
And every sense at height, I felt that hate
Drew near me in the air. Then all my blood
Gathered to meet the danger; quick as light,
I stood on guard, my sword flashed forth, my cloak
Covered my arm, the dagger in my hand
Romano carved—sharp as a viper's sting,
You gave it me—and so was ready when
Out of the darkness four men leaped on me,
Crying: 'Kill, kill.' The foremost I knew well,

A villain like a buffalo, whose hair
Curls dark o'er eyes where murder crouches low—
A slave that stabbed my cousin whom I loved,
Last year, behind St. Angelo, because
He laughed at fat Colonna—I avenged
His blood ; Colonna sleeps a dreamless sleep.
Joy filled me when I met this brute of hire,
And, crying out, I disengaged his sword,
And with his lunge, his head passed under me.
Laughing aloud, I drove my dagger down
Right through his apelike ear into his brain.
The others started back, and then I saw
The narrow lane where those wild beasts had lurked,
And whence they sprang, and as a lizard darts,
I darted into it, and found a porch
Where—like a wild hog whom I hunted once,
Who, with his back against a mighty pine,
And sheltered by two roots, on either side
Outstretching far, awaited my boar-hounds—
I stood at bay. I slew the first who came ;
Piercing his heart ; and I had slain the rest
With laughing ease, for by this time I sang
Your verses while I fought—but that the wretch

Who was behind his fellow, dropping his sword
Pushed at me with a boar-spear ; then I thought
That I might never see you more—and cried
A sharp faint cry and heavily sprang back,
'Scaping that coward thrust, against the door.
And you, my Lady, favoured me, for then
The rotten bolt gave way, and staggering in,
I touched a staircase winding in the wall,
Up which I ran—these after me—until
I reached the top, and saw a square low room
Ruined and empty, and between the beams—
For all the roof had gone—the moon shone in,
Flooding the floor with radiance ; and the beams
Cast bars of shadow that in this wild hour
Of battle, seemed the colour of fresh blood.
The door had gone, the place was all alone,
Save where across the rude stone window, arched
Like those in Venice, a tall bay-tree flung
Its branches all in flower, and in them sat
A nightingale and sang her heart out to the night,
And the silent house. And then I heard their steps
That blundered up the stairs, and rushed on death ;
For standing by the door, I waited till

The spearman, who came first, had passed me by ;
Him I struck dead, and o'er his body fell
His comrade at my feet. I raised my sword
And would have slain him, but the moonlight smote
Full on his face, and then I knew the man.
A noble, cousin to your husband's house,
Gino, your foe and mine, a traitorous hound ;
You know his nature, tiger to the core.
'We meet at last,' I said, 'take up your sword ;
Arise, defend your life.' Gnashing his teeth,
And sliding in his comrade's blood, he rose,
And stood, pale as a corse, beneath the stream
Of steady moonlight—Then in silence grim
We closed for fight : but he was weak through shame,
And fear of death was on him, for my sword
At the third pass went out behind his throat—
The hilt, clashing against his neck-bone, broke
The choking cry he uttered as he fell,
Dying, not dead. He lived to hear me say—
'Take, dog, your wages, go unshrived to hell !
Lie here unburied, none shall find your corse ;
Lucrezia, whom once you dared to love,
Shall learn to-night your cowardice and shame,

Slain vilely like a cur with curs.' He heard,
Enraged, and beat his fists upon the floor
In his own blood, and the blood leaped on high
Staining my cloak. And so, the four were dead.—

I stood alone, and leaning on my sword,
Felt in the silence half ashamed, and sick
Of all the noisy passions of the world—
For now I heard the nightingale again
Singing her sweet untroubled canticle,
And a low wind, that ran the bay-tree through,
Tinkled its leaves together. All the world
Was full of peace, and in the quiet I seemed
To dream, and saw the room as if it were
A picture, and myself a figure in it,
Painted to life; and then the sense of Dream
Left me, and in the cold and luminous moon
The dead men lay, and looked alive and fierce—
And from their wounds the blood flowed by my feet
Slowly across the bars of light and dark
Into the hearth where ancient ashes lay,
And where the moonlight struck upon the blood
It glowed like fire. Lucrezia, my hand

Shook for a moment as I sheathed my sword—
So still it was, and lonely, and the dead
Do not defend themselves. But then I laughed,
A low glad laugh, and thought how you would smile
And kiss me, pleased with love, and with the thrill,
That desperate battle done for you, and Death
Done on your foes, will add to passion's hour.

Would it were come to-night! But, as I said,
I found when I returned at dawn,—the bells
Clashing for matins as I crossed the bridge—
Letters upon the business of the Duke
For the sea-fleet at Ostia—I go,
But in a week exactly from this date
I come to Rome. At midnight, by the gate,
Where the dark ilex hangs its shadows, come,
Open, and take me to your breast—if Death
Stand in the way, so much the worse for Death—
One kiss of yours is worth a thousand deaths—
Farewell, I ride at speed—but all the way
I hold you, body and soul, within my arms.

VERSAILLES (1784)

IN Carnival we were, and supped that night
In a long room that overlooked the Square,
When that strange matter happed of which you ask.
We rang all pleasure's carillon that week ;
Feasts and rich shows, and hunting in the woods,
Light love that lived on change, deep drinking, mirth
As mad as Nero's on the Palatine ;
The women were as wild as we, and like
The King's, our money flew about in showers—
They said—'The people starved'—it could not be ;
We spent a million on the Carnival.
And now for fifty years gone by I have heard
'The people starve'—Why then do the useless beasts
Gender so fast? Less mouths, more bread! For me,
I do not care whether they live or die,—

Canaille the dunghill breeds—but Leslie cared,
The young Scotch musketeer whose waking dream
You wish to hear from me, who only live
Of all our joyous company. I am old,
My life burns like the thinnest flame, but then
It was a glorious fire, and on that night
I led the feast, and roof and table rang
With revelry : till at the height of noise
A sudden silence fell, and while we smiled,
Waiting for whom should break it, the great clock
Struck three in the still air—and a hushed sound,
Like coming wind passed by, and in its breath
I thought I heard, far off, a wail and roar
As if a city perished at one stroke—
The rest heard not, but Leslie starting up
And muttering—‘ Death, Death and his troops are nigh,’
Strode to the window. Half asleep he seemed,
Pale as that madman Damiens on the day
He met the torture—and across the bar
He leaned, and saw the white square in the moon.
Men mocked, and let him be—they knew his mood ;
One of his Highland trances, so they said—
But I kept watch—the grim gray North in him,

With nobles, dames, and maidens, pages, all
The mighty names of France, and midst them walked
The King and Queen, not ours, but those that come
Hereafter, and I heard soft speech of love
And laughter please the night—when momentarily
The moon went out, and from the darkness streamed
A hissing flood of rain that where it fell,
Changed into blood, and 'twixt the courtyard stones
Blood welled as water from a mountain moss ;
And the gay crowd, unwitting, walked in it—
Bubbling it rose past ankle, knee, and waist,
From waist to throat ; and still they walked as if
They knew it not, until a fierce wind lashed
The crimson sea, and beat it into waves,
And when its waves smote on their faces, then
They knew and shrieked, but all in vain, the blood
Storming upon them, whelmed and drowned them all.
At which a blinding lightning like a knife
Gashed the cloud's breast, and dooming thunder pealed.
I woke, and crying "Horror" knew no more—
I've seen the fates of France—the day of God
And vengeance is at hand ; take heed—repent—
Leave me to rest.'

We laughed to hear him preach,
And left him on the couch, where like a man
Drunken he slept, but when he rose, his hue
Was changed, a cloud was on his eyes, his mouth
Was stern. He sang, he ruffled, loved no more,
Provoked no man, and went about like one
Who—can you think it? thought there was a God
Who midst his court, cared how his people lived—
We all were doomed, he said, and France was doomed,
He would not stay! And so gave up his sword,
And went to Scotland where in some grim tower
He loved and married—Fool!—a nameless girl,
And made the peasants happy, I am told;
But we lived out our life, and met no doom—
And now I am old, and Louis, my good friend
The Well-beloved, is dead long since, and soon
My time will come!—The people starve, they say,
And curse. I know they curse and hate us! Well,
We will ride down and slay the mutinous dogs—
Why yesterday, my horses in the crowd
Threw down a mother and a child, and splashed
A hideous dwarf, who shook his fist and cursed;
I laughed, but as he cursed with skill, I asked

The ruffian's name—'Marat,' they said, 'a leech,
Who physics horses and the common herd,
Brute healing brute—the people's friend, and yet
He takes our wages—writes us down, but keeps
A place in d'Artois' stable!' These are the scum
That Leslie feared—Artois shall flog the man.

THE LIONESS

WHY is my face so sad, you ask, and why
Is there so great a scar upon my hand?
'Tis a small story, but you have been kind,
And I am near to death—and death heals all.
Sir, I would thank you, and to tell my sorrow,
Untold to others, is to thank you best.

Five years have gone since Pierre was one with me
In work and love. We kept a wild-beast show,
And travelling in vans from town and town,
Saw many lands, and pleased the common folk.
I was the Lion-tamer, and though Pierre
Misliked the business for me, yet the child,
Annette, my little girl whose starved-out bones
I laid to-day in the grave—the last live thing

I had to love on earth—had need of food
And clothes and learning, so that Pierre gave way,
Although he feared—not for himself, my man
Was brave as Alexander—but for me.
He could not take my work, for, Sir, it needs
The training of a life ; but when I stood
Among the four great beasts that snarled, and paced—
Three lions and a lioness—as softly
As hatred with his hand beneath his cloak ;
Pierre kept his station close beside the door,
Watching, his fingers on the bolt, in act
To spring within and help me, if a beast,
Remembering the desert, leaped at me—
And this his faithfulness and love became
My utter misery, and his dreadful death.

Two of the males were quiet, sluggish sots,
That, cornered in their cages, slept and snored,
Or growled, prowling in dreams—not so the third,
Who, shaggy-maned, black-visaged, huge, like an ox,
Strode to and fro all day the cage, and thought
Of the dark Afric river and the hunt,
And moonlight midst the troops of antelopes.

I knew his story—trapped one gusty night
By natives on the Congo—Young and fierce
He came to me, but slavery never tamed
His passionate love of freedom. Oftentimes
I watched his eyes dilate and dim with tears,
It seemed of human passion, and his lips
Draw back, and bare the stark and yellow fangs
With scorn, self-scorn, I thought. I know he felt
An incommunicable grief; and had
The beast been man, he would have slain himself.
I pitied him, and never made him leap
The bar, or thread the rings, or play the tricks
The others used—but when I sat enthroned,
He came to me, and laid his stately head
Upon my lap, and then arose and sat
Close by my chair, erect like that great beast
I saw at Venice by the Arsenal—
Then gazed, it seemed, o'er space, but I laid soft
My hand upon his head, and smoothed his ear.

I had no fear of him, but I did dread,
When I was out of gear, the lioness!
A long gaunt beast, as lissom as a snake,

Treacherous, hypocrite in every hair !
Death watched me daily from her shifting eyes ;
And were it not she feared the iron whip
I bit her flesh with—for I hated her—
She would have torn me till she found my heart.

In colder climes her blood half-frozen, slept,
But in the Southern suns it coursed like fire
Under her glossy skin, and in her brain
Became a blinding fury. Day and night
She knew no rest—her eyes were full of blood,
Her growl the low continuous thunder roar
Heard from the plain when storm is in the Alps.
At every step she made upon the floor
Her claws went out, and drawn back, rent away
Sharp slivers of the wood, and when askance
She looked at me, an arrow of hell-fire
Flew in my face ; and yet, her will to slay,
Through fear inconstant, bent to mine. I lived
Like one who treads a slippery shelf of rock
Above a precipice ! If once the beast
O'erpassed, in wrath, the limits of her dread,
Or if some chance relaxed my heart, my life
Smitten by her, fell headlong down the steep.

This was her temper when we came to Rome.
It was the spring, a warm scirocco spring ;
Among the cypress roots sweet violets oped
Their childish eyelids, and in ilex coverts
Shy cyclamen pushed through the fallen leaves
Their milky mouth. Anemones, whose blood
Reddened the fields, rejoiced my heart, and o'er
The clustering jonquils and tall asphodel,
The almond-trees upon the Aventine
Seemed like white clouds asleep among the hills.
I was as happy as a girl—the air,
Velvet to cheek and lip, recalled the days
When I was young in Provence, whence I came—

Oh, Sir, my joy was fateful ; on the day
Our show was opened, she, my enemy,
Came fluttering in with smiles, and sat her down
In the first row, and stared, and when I saw
Her eager, cold and curious light-blue eyes
Fixed on my lions, then on me, as if
I were another animal, and not
A woman like herself, a shudder ran
O'er me like wind across the mountain grass—
I lost my head a moment, and fell back,

Staggering, with wavering sight, against the cage,
And Pierre, as white as dust with terror, cried
'Beware—' for missing now my steady look,
The lioness drew inward on her haunch
Her mighty shoulders, and her eyes, half-shut,
Blazed ; but I gathered up my heart, and strode
Straight to the beast, and beat her down, and set
My foot upon her throat, and all the folk
Cheered, and the woman leaning forward, smiled
And clapped her hands together as the snake
Clatters his rattles ere he strikes for death.
Fool not to keep my first instinctive dread,
And fool still more to let her swift smooth tongue
Play on my pride—for when the show was closed,
She stayed and questioned of our life, and made
Me and my Pierre her friends, and supped with us,
And I, enchanted, gave my heart to her.

Day after day she came, and when the shed
Was empty of the people—sat alone,
Watching the beasts, and smiling to herself,
As if she read a book ; and once I said,
'Twould seem they were your kindred, so intense

Your pleasure in them !' 'Well, perhaps they are,'
She answered, 'distant cousins !' and she yawned
Lazily, like a cat ; and then she took
The lion cubs—and this was her delight—
And held them in her lap, and played with them,
Tossed them and stirred their passions, made them fight,
And when they glared, and growled and rolled together
Biting and tearing, 'O,' she said, 'how soon'
They will become great beasts, and set their hearts
On living food ! I'd give a year of life
To see them in the desert strike their prey'—
And then her smile was cruel, and she grew
In motions, eyes and mouth so like the lioness,
You would have thought that they were one in heart.
Yet the great beast abhorred her, and one day,
Trembling with rage, launched like a thunderbolt
Her body at the woman who had pushed
An arm within the bars, and had not Pierre
Seized her, and whirled her from the place, her flesh
Had been down ripped from shoulder to the wrist.
I thought that this would fright her, but she said—
'Afraid ! No, no, I love all dangerous beasts,
But most of all the mighty cats, for they

Have power at the back of subtilty.
Their step is velvet, like the night, until,
As sudden as the lightning stabs the dark,
Their claws flash forth and hatred drinks its fill ;
So would I wait, so spring—if I were wronged’—
And then she ceased, but o’er her face there ran
So black a wind of passion, that I quailed,
Seeing her heart—but while it came it went,
And all the woman smiled as smooth as steel.

But after this, she set her will to raise
This fury in the lioness. At times,
The brute couched low, immovable as stone,
And only the slow eyelids lift and droop,
And the fierce flare beneath them, told its wrath :
But when the day was hot, and quenchless thirst
Plagued it, the woman had her will, and lashed
The yellow devil into storm and flame.
Standing, her arm outstretched, she mocked the beast,
As if it understood—‘ Wake, wake,’ she cried,
‘ The forest pool is clear, the moon shines bright,
The path is full of herds that come to drink ;
Waken, and strike the prey.’ And then she laughed—

'Ho, ho, you may not ; caught and caged and chained ;
The free beast lashed from town to town to make
Sport for the peasant curs. Have you no heart,
No anger, no despair?—Roar, wail and howl,
And make me music.'

Then she tossed in the air
The two small cubs, and made them writhe and scream,
Knitting her thin, long fingers round their throat,
And laughing like a child—at which the lioness
Leaped at her, dashing on the bars, and fell,
And bounded to her feet, and ran like fire
Let loose in a dry wood across the cage,
Barking with rage ; then, powerless to hurt,
And therefore lost in passion, flung herself
Upon her back, and with her gleaming claws
Tore at her breast, as I have seen a woman
Rend open in mad wrath, with both her hands,
The robe that hid her bosom.

I at first
Was pleased with the rough game, but when at night,
After her daily maddening of the beast,
She came to see me with it in the cage,
And watched me curiously, and with, it seemed,

The expectation of some dreadful thing,
I felt like some wild creature in a net
That waits the hunter's knife. My courage ebbed,
Then rose, unequally. Each separate nerve
Thrilled like a string too tense for temperate sound ;
My will and eye were not at one, and Pierre,
In fear for me, begged her to come no more.
'I am afraid,' he said, 'the lioness
Is devil-stung ; revenge and hatred watch
Within her, like two murderers in a wood ;
One slip, one error, and my wife is slain.'
'Why that,' she laughed, 'is hers to guard against ;
Her fame is more, the more enraged the brute.'
Then Pierre drew back in horror—'Go,' he cried,
'Go, and return no more.' At that, the woman
Paled to the lips, and then a flame ran up
From throat to brow, and in her eyes I thought
Wrath lay outstretched, and like the lioness
In act to spring. 'Insolent !' so she said,
'I will see your face no more, but ere we part,
You shall receive my legacy, I'll leave
My anger in the heart of that huge cat.'
And white with cruelty and scorn, like those

Great Roman ladies in the circus, who
Gossiped while men were torn of beasts, and signed
'Death' when a fighter fell, because the slaughter
Stirred their slow pulse—she thrust my arm aside,
And went straight onward to the den, and grasped
The bars and shook them, fearless in her rage ;
And cried aloud upon the lioness and threw
Her glove into the eyelids of the brute—
Whereat it sprang so fearfully, the cage
Rocked like an earthquake-smitten house, but she
Drew back and smiled, and seizing on the cubs,
Flung them against the cage and laughed aloud,
Mocking the beast and us, and many times
She did this thing, the while the lioness
Roared like a storm, and every hair pricked up,
Stiff as a dagger, and her sinewy tail
Incessant whirled and fell, like a flail, and lashed
The cage—at which her three companion beasts,
Infected with her fury, leaped to their feet,
And joined their voices, roar on roar, to hers,
Until the close air in the canvas shed
Throbbled like the sky around a tall church tower
When the enormous bells are clashed for war,

Or fire leaps on the town—but midst the noise,
At intervals, while Pierre and I stood still
In fear and in confusion, strangely fell
Upon our ears the hooting of an owl
Among the brushwood on the Palatine—
She heard it too, and tossing up her head,
Cried out ‘Your fate,’ and passed beyond the door.

But as she went the lioness stood still,
And watched her, growling low, with eyes
Full of gray hate, and then she snarled at me
So fiercely, that I read her thoughts, and knew
She held me guilty of the woman’s work ;
And I—I could not help it—cried aloud,
‘I have not done you wrong,’ at which the beast
Laughed loud, or seemed to laugh, for now my head
Swam, and my heart was sick, and in my brain
A harp-string seemed to snap, and shameful fear
Came on me like a sea and drowned my will.
And since that day the Fiend of Fear sits crouched,
Gathered between my shoulders, and her voice
Crawls in my ears, and round my throat, her arms.
I hid my state from Pierre, for on that night

Our benefit was fixed—and set my heart
To fight with fear for conquest over death !
Alas ! not mine the death, but death in life ;
I lived to weep—my husband died for me.

'Twas a dark sultry, moonless night. The day
Had threatened storm, and when the evening fell,
The sun plunged downwards like a ball of brass,
Burning among the up-climbing clouds of storm,
That red with menace, when the night had come,
Sank down without a breath of wind and whelmed
The exhausted city. Nature feared ; my beasts
Moaned in their dens and tossed ; and when the shed
Was filled with folk, a sickly smell and steam
Rose up, and caught my breath, and Woe drew near,
And walked, a gray-haired phantom, in my heart.
Then my great Afric lion roared and wailed,
And when I came into the cage, looked up
So piteously at me, I think he knew
The misery that next moment fell on me.
For now the glare of blood-red lightning flashed
And kindled every face, and then a peal
Of thunder, midst of shrieks and cries, broke loose,

Shattering earth and heaven, and mighty hail
Fell in a sheet—and I shrank back amazed,
Sheltering my eyes, and in that instant leaped
The Lioness, and tore me on the wrist,
For I had sprung aside. Next moment, Pierre,
In-darting, seized, and flung me out of doors,
But stumbling as he followed me, was jammed
Close in the gate, and the great beast, enraged,
Sprang roaring on his back, and knit her paws
Around his throat, and bore him to the earth ;
And drove her teeth into his neck, and snapped
Asunder his back-bone. I saw him slain,
And fell to earth, as falls a thunderbolt.

I woke in hospital. Six weeks had passed,
Weeks of a fever lodged within the brain,
That imaged o'er and o'er the beast's fierce leap,
My shriek, the rescue, and my husband's death,
With mad monotony. Would I had died !
But when I lived again, Annette was there,
And kissed me sweetly, and my mother's heart
Beat back despair ! I lived to love Pierre's child,
And hand in hand we went to see the place,

Where, in the grass and violets, beneath
The shadow of the city wall, they laid
The broken body of my love ; and some,
Who honoured his brave deed, had placed a stone
Above his head and writ these words on it—
'He died to save his wife,' at which I wept,
And blessed them ! Many too were kind,
And gave me gifts, but Rome was cursed for me ;
My heart was dead. The lioness was killed
By order of the town, the beasts were sold
To pay my debts, and I passed on alone,
Into the thoughtless world, and begged my way
Back to Provence ; and now Annette is dead,
And I am waiting for the heavenly call
To meet my husband ; patiently I wait,
For I have seen him often in the night
Stretch forth his arms to me, and call my name
Out of a wondrous light. I think my hour
Is near at hand, for in the last few days,
And even while I tell you, Sir, this tale,
I have forgiven in the name of God
Her who slew me, my husband and my child.

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Years afterwards I met the woman, who
So lightly followed fancy, and she said,
'Yes, I recall the tragic tale—I read
The story in the papers, and I went
To see the poor thing, and to comfort her,
With money, for I liked her—But I found
An empty lodging—she had gone away—
Yet she was useful to me—for I took
Her life, and certain facts in it, and made them
Into a little book that pleased the world.'

BALLADS AND LYRICS



THE KING AND THE HUNTSMAN

THE king and his huntsman are gone to the chase
And the huntsman's son with them,
Two nights they lay, and two days they rode,
Till they came to the forest's hem.

'O what are these meadows,' the king he said,
'And this stream that runs in flood,
And why is the grass as green as a corpse,
And the stream as red as blood?

Is this the meadow and this the stream,'
And he laughed both loud and free :
'Where it's twenty years I loved a maid,
And sorely she loved me?'

Then up and spake the huntsman dark,
And he was deadly fell,
'Now draw your dagger, my son,' he said,
'And send this king to hell.

Revenge burns slow, but it flames at last—
The maiden was my daughter,
She broke her heart for thee and shame
And died in this wild water.

Nor wife nor child, but the carrion crow
Shall hear thy dying groan,
And Ellen's stream shall be red with thy blood,
And the wolves strip thy breast-bone.'

Then the king grew pale as the snow at dawn,
And he bared his hunting-knife ;
'O woe that I left my good deer-hound
For I should not lose my life.'

'I slew him first,' the huntsman said—
And fierce at the king he ran ;
'Strike down at his back, my son, strike hard,
For he shall not die like a man.'

And they washed their hands in the red red blood,
And over the seas to Spain ;
And the only sextons that buried the king
Were the wild beasts and the rain.

THE NOBLE LAY OF AILLINN

PRINCE BAILÉ of Ulster rode out in the morn
To meet his love at the ford ;
And he loved her better than lands or life,
And dearer than his sword.

And she was Aillinn, fair as the sea,
The Prince of Leinster's daughter,
And she longed for him more than a wounded man,
Who sees death, longs for water.

They sent a message each to each,
'O meet me near or far ;'
And the ford divided the kingdoms two,
And the kings were both at war.

And the Prince came first to the water's pass,
And O he thought no ill :
When he saw with pain a great gray man
Come striding o'er the hill.

His cloak was the ragged thunder-cloud,
And his cap the whirling snow,
And his eyes were the lightning in the storm,
And his horn he 'gan to blow.

'What news, what news—thou great gray man,
I fear 'tis ill with me ?'
'O Aillinn is dead, and her lips are cold,
And she died for loving thee.'

And he looked, and saw no more the man,
But a trail of driving rain ;
'Woe, woe !' he cried, and took his sword
And drave his heart in twain.

And out of his blood burst forth a spring,
And a yew-tree out of his breast ;
And it grew so deep, and it grew so high,
The doves came there to rest.

But Aillinn was coming to keep her tryst,
The hour her lover fell ;
And she rode as fast as the western wind
Across the heathery hill.

Behind her flew her loosened hair,
Her happy heart did beat ;
When she was ware of a cloud of storm
Came driving down the street.

And out of it stepped a great gray man,
And his cap was peaked with snow ;
The fire of death was in his eyes,
And he 'gan his horn to blow.

'What news, what news—thou great gray man ?
And is it ill to me ?'
'O Bailé the Prince is dead at the ford,
And he died for loving thee.'

Pale, pale she grew, and two large tears
Dropped down like heavy rain ;
And she fell to the earth with a woful cry,
For she broke her heart in twain

And out of her tears two fountains rose
That watered all the ground ;
And out of her heart an apple-tree grew
That heard the waters sound.

O woe were the kings, and woe were the queens,
And woe were the people all ;
And the poets sang their love and their death
In cottage and in hall.

And the men of Ulster a tablet made
From the wood of Bailé's tree,
And the men of Leinster did the like
Of Aillinn's apple-tree.

And on the one the poets wrote
The lover-tales of Leinster ;
And on the other all the deeds
That lovers wrought in Ulster.

Now when a hundred years had gone,
The king of all the land
Kept feast at Tara—and he bade
His poets sing a strand.

They sang the sweet unhappy tale,
The noble Aillinn's lay.
'Go, bring the tablets,' cried the king,
'For I have wept to-day.'

But when he held in his right hand
The wood of Bailé's tree,
And in his left the tablet smooth
From Aillinn's apple-tree,

The lovers in the wood who kept
Love-longing ever true,
Knew one another, and at once
From the hands of the king they flew.

As ivy to the oak they clung,
Their kiss no man could sever—
O joy for lovers parted long,
To meet, at last, for ever!

VENGEANCE

DEAD like a dog in the street !

And his white face turned to the sky ;
Stone dead, my enemy, at my feet,
Who dared to kill him but I ?

A month since he stole her from me,
A month like a burning year ;
I travelled the land and I travelled the sea,
For revenge, and I find him here,

Silent and sightless, at rest,
Escaped, when I marked him mine own :
The dagger was keen that cleft his breast,
Would God I had driven it home.

Her I can leave to her fate,
 She was always light and sweet ;
But 'tis bitter to miss the quenching of hate
 In the blood of the man at my feet.

Therefore my hate is my life,
 I cannot loose its spell,
But when I am dead I shall meet him in strife,
 And beat him down in hell.

AT THE TURNING OF THE GLEN

At the turning of the glen
In happy hour I met my foe ;
To and fro we lashed, and then
A good sword-stroke laid him low.

‘Grant me grace,’ the recreant saith,
‘For her sake we both adore.’
‘Dog, the prayer shall bring thee death,
Thou shalt never see her more ;

No, nor I ! That she has borne
Words or looks of love from thee,
Earns for her eternal scorn ;
She is dead and worse, for me.

Yet since her caprice has made
All my love seem shame and guilt,
She may live, but thou art sped ;
‘Take my dagger to the hilt.’

THE HULDRA-WOMAN

Who walks alone in the red pinewood,
Under the Norway sky?
Olaf the Dane, and his heart is full
Of wrath and misery.

Then out of the gloom he came into a glade,
And the moon was bright therein;
And he saw a maiden in the midst,
As beautiful as sin.

O soft and fierce her deep gray eyes,
But her cheek like blood on snow;
And her hair was like the flaming fire
Of war-ships in a low.

And she came daintily over the grass,
And laid her hand on his,
'Olaf,' she said—'come, dance with me,
And thou shalt know my bliss.'

'O I have no heart,' young Olaf said,
'To dance or kiss with thee,
For I am sick within, and moon and sun
Are both alike to me.'

Then he turned him round and saw her back,
And O the sight of dread ;
For she was as hollow and dark as a boat,
From the heel unto the head.

'A fiend,' he cried ; and her wildwood eyes
Flashed like a harlot's knife !
'I am Huldra,' she said, and softly smiled—
'And thou shalt lose thy life.'

Quoth Olaf, 'That would please me well ;
For the woman I love and hate,
Is hollow as thou from the head to the heart,
And death is a better mate.'

‘O is it so,’ the Huldra laughed,
 ‘Then thou art free from me ;
Stay, stay with me in the long pinewood
 And I will comfort thee.

And thou shalt forget the liar thou lov’st
 When my arms are round thee flung :
I can make myself like a maid of the earth,
 And I am always young.’

‘Is that better than death?’ dark Olaf cried,
 ‘For damned I then shall be ;
But I do not care a ray of the moon
 What happens unto me.

I thought that Love was God in Heaven,
 But I find it is flesh on earth ;
Fill up the hollow of thy back,
 And come, and make me mirth.

But swear the oath that binds thee most
 From me thou wilt not err,
For if I have not thee, I must
 Return again to her.’

'I swear by the forest and by the night
To cling to thee like flame.'

'Then I will stay,' he said, 'with thee;
'Tis less of sorrow and shame.'

Woe, woe in Norway! A soul is lost,
With Huldra gone to stay;
But joy for the woman—for she can love
Again, and again betray.

THE END OF THE WORLD

It was in a dream he saw her first
In her golden hair ; and her fathomless eyes
Called him aloud, and a quenchless thirst
Burned on her lips—and she said, ‘ Arise,

Seek me and find me !’ And he cried—‘ Where ?’
And she smiled and said, as a great wind whirled
From her naked limbs her streaming hair—
‘ Seek me, my love, at the end of the world.’

And she vanished, but he awoke with a cry,
And looked abroad on the lonely night ;
The snow was on earth, and the moon in the sky,
And the pines and the hamlet were black in her light.

Then out of the silence passion grew
To unbearable fire, and he rode away—
And home, and the past, and the world he knew,
Died in his soul ere the morn was gray.

Westward always he rode along,
With steadfast eyes, and a burning heart ;
And at times he heard a soft wild song
In unexpected places start.

In deep pine-woods when midnight came,
Echoed her passionate first cry ;
And in ocean and lakes and in living flame
Her rose-white body flitted by.

Weeks, months and years, enrapt, he fared,
No man or woman heard his name,
Nor earth nor skies he knew, nor cared
What shook the world with fame or shame.

Great nations saw him pass them by,
Deserts and seas his wandering spanned ;
Till, at last, o'er peaks that pierced the sky,
He reached the dim unpeopled land.

The sun had set ; on a black-toothed range
 Barred clouds let loose a blood-red rain ;
And he marked by the moon in her second change
 That he stood at the edge of a boundless plain.

Sand-steeped it was, and barren as glass,
 More dumb than death ; and a ghastly air
Rose from its breast like a vapour of brass ;
 And suddenly then he felt despair.

But ere he could think, a whisper came
 Warm in his ear ! ‘ O love, rejoice ’—
And he felt her before him flash like a flame,
 And the wind was filled with the sound of her voice.

‘ Seek me and find me ! ’ Again, and again,
 Its passion like waters around him whirled,
And the wind and the voice bore him over the plain,
 And laid him beneath the steep of the world.

To left and to right swept the adamant wall,
 That grips the land and the seas in its girth ;
And the sky fell over its edge like a pall,
 But its base was the iron heart of the earth.

And yet it trembled, for behind,
 With unimaginable sound,
Lashed white with an everlasting wind,
 Heaved the World-Serpent round and round.

He saw not, he heard not, but his cry
 Fled through the twilight like a dart ;—
‘One night is mine before I die ;
 Come, long-belovèd, to my heart.’

Then a living globe of fire and dew
 Leaped from the crag, from its topmost shelf ;
Its speed burned the air through which it flew,
 And out of it slipped her radiant self

Into his arms, and she drew his head
 Close to the roses her bosom bore—
‘This is the end of the world,’ she said ;
 ‘Thine end and mine for evermore.’

THE JUNGFRAU'S CRY

I, VIRGIN of the SNOWS, have lived
 Uncounted years apart ;
Mated with Sunlight, Stars and Heaven,
 But I am cold at heart.

High mates ! Ye teach me purity,
 And lonely thought and truth ;
But I have never lived, and yet,
 I have eternal youth.

Blow, tropic winds, and warm rains, fall,
 And melt my snowy crest ;
Let soft woods clothe my shoulders fair,
 Deep grass lie on my breast.

And let me feed a thousand herds,
And hear the tinkling bells,
Till the brown châteaux cluster close,
In all my stream-fed dells.

So may I hear the sweep of scythes,
And beating of the flails,
My maidens singing as they spin,
And the voice of nightingales.

And little children in their joy—
And where my violets hide,
Soft interchange of lover's vows,
Sweet hymns at eventide.

Alas! cold Sunlight, Stars and Heaven,
My high companions, call.
The ice-clad life is pure and stern—
I am weary of it all.

THE STOCKHORN AND THE VALLEY

THE Stockhorn looked down on the Valley,
And cried—‘O give me your heart.’
But the Valley loved only herself, and said,
‘Our lives are too far apart.’

The Stockhorn heard, and he hid his head
Far up in the lonely air ;
‘A pleasure has gone,’ the Valley said,
‘From my life—but I do not care.’

Then the Stockhorn gathered, in wrath, his clouds,
And rained on the Valley, and flared ;
And the Valley said, ‘If you had done this
At first, I might have cared.’

Then the Valley began to dream, and Love
Crept into her like pain ;
'I wish he were back,' the Valley said,
'And I'm weary of this rain.'

And the rain it ceased, and the Stockhorn shook
The clouds from his haughty head ;
'Look down on me, and love me now,
For I repent,' the Valley said.

But the Stockhorn had fallen in love with the Dawns
That over the mountains rove ;
And he heard not the streams of the Valley sob,
Nor knew that she died of love.

THE TREE OF LIFE

THERE were three fruits upon the tree ;
Love, Knowledge, Duty—Most of men
Take Love first—then they know—and then
Find Duty, best of all the three.

But he plucked Duty from the tree
The first—and Knowledge then he got,
And then seized Love, and he forgot
Duty and Knowledge—whence was misery.

THE EARTH AND MAN

A LITTLE sun, a little rain,
A soft wind blowing from the west—
And woods and fields are sweet again
And warmth within the mountain's breast.

So simple is the earth we tread,
So quick with love and life her frame,
Ten thousand years have dawned and fled,
And still her magic is the same.

A little love, a little trust,
A soft impulse, a sudden dream,—
And life as dry as desert dust
Is fresher than a mountain stream.

So simple is the heart of man,
So ready for new hope and joy ;
Ten thousand years since it began
Have left it younger than a boy.

MAY AND LOVE

MAY in the woods and in my heart
And we beside the river ;
King Love between us flying,
Said, ' Children, love for ever.'

I heard him, and I thought she heard,
Her lips began to quiver,
And so I shyly kissed her ;
Love laughed along the river !

SORROW

WE stood alone in a nook of the cliff,
And the moon was dim on the deep,
And I looked at her eyes, and they lit with love,
And sorrow waked from sleep.

And like a bird that with a cry
Dips swiftly to her nest,
She stole her arm round me and hid
Her face upon my breast.

Silent, she rested there, at peace
From days of long desire—
And the tears were in her eyes and mine,
And in my heart a fire.

And I stooped to kiss her—‘No, be still,’
She said, and sadly smiled ;
‘You must never touch my lips with yours,
For life would be too wild.’

‘Then the moon may give love to the sea,’ I cried,
‘But nothing to her the sea’—
‘Yes, that is it,’ she said, ‘alas !
And so it must ever be.’

THE DREAM

I DREAMT I had died and fallen asleep,
As a tired man at night ;
And when I awoke, I was floating alone
In the hollow infinite.

No sun, no sound—but now and then
A dim gray light fled by,
And sometimes a soft hushing sound
Passed through it like a sigh.

So lonely it was that I broke my heart,
But yet I could not die ;
And I cried to her I loved so well
An unutterable cry.

Then I saw a light, like a star, fall down
 Through the height of the abyss,
And the infinite vapour flushed like a rose,
 And summer filled it with bliss.

And before I could think, I was in her arms,
 And on her lips, my kiss—
'I came,' she said, 'when you called, and the joy
 Of Heaven is not like this.'

HEAVEN AND EARTH

LAST night I saw a golden sphere
Flash through the moonlit atmosphere
And fall, and strike the earth, and split,
And she came radiant out of it.

The crown of life was on her head,
And in her hand a garland red,
Of roses gathered where the skies
Are delicate in Paradise.

‘This garland take,’ she cried, ‘and be
Lonely no more, nor think of me,
Virtue it has to heal and bless,
And its scent brings forgetfulness.

Afar in Heaven I heard your cry
Pierce through the Angel songs on high ;
And God in pity said—" Descend,
And bid his madness have an end."'

I looked, and in her face and eyes
Pale goodness shone like arctic skies,
Her wearied pity struck me cold,
Nor seemed she lovely as of old.

'Fair creature with the clear still eyes,
Fret not my heart,' I said, 'with lies,
For God who loves so well above
Sent no forgetfulness to love.

Out of your heart that on this earth
Grew chill so soon, the thought had birth ;
And even in Heaven it galls your pride
To think I dream you by my side.

I will not fit your humour. Go,
Your heart is like the frozen snow ;
Be satisfied ;—I have forgiven ;
Take back your roses into Heaven.'

She frowned, the white flame on her head
Darkened a moment ere she fled ;
The roses blackened in her hand,
And fell dead dust upon the land.

SONG

WHERE art thou, child,—art thou asleep
Far from my longing arms?
What matters that the midnight deep
Is full of wild alarms.

Arise, love laughs at fear, and come ;
Come from thy dewy rest ;
Thine eyes will light thee to thy home,
Pillowed upon my breast.

THE MEMORY

I PASSED along the water gate
 Where many years ago,
By Ellen and my love enrapt
 I wandered to and fro.

How fair she was ! A woodland face,
 Her eyes the harebell's blue,
And a lark hung by her window sill,
 And sang the whole year through.

And she trilled songs against the bird ;
 O when I heard them sing,
The Heavens laughed, - and winter's heart
 Did prophesy of Spring.

Sweet flowers along the casement grew,
 Vervain, and roses wild ;
And as she sewed, she glanced at me,
 And gladly, shyly smiled.

And every day she dropped a flower,
 A message at my feet ;
And when I kissed it, she broke forth
 In song that filled the street.

Long since it was, and I know not
 If she be yet alive—
O were she at the lattice now,
 And I but twenty-five.

THE MILKY-WAY

FLED from the city's gloom, I see

 Again the Milky-Way—

Do you remember how you said,

 That night of happy play,

It was the Appian road, on which,

 Among the crowd of stars,

The planets drove like senators,

 Upon their golden cars.

You see it every night, but I

 Have looked for it in vain ;

Impatient to behold in heaven

 The image in my brain.

There silent shines the starry way !

 No gloom, no clouds annoy ;—

O little serves, when love is deep,

 To give a lover joy.

THE QUIET STREAM

SEVEN miles I drove to find a stream
That leaped its rocks among ;
But I found only one that made
A little lulling song.

O'er pebbly shallows soft it ran,
And in its quiet breast,
The fresh-born beechen leaves of May,
Were mirrored and at rest.

Among its little island stones
The water birds were gay,
And all the trees along the banks
Bent down to see it play.

And I remembered her whose life
 So many years ago,
Beside my restless heart was wont
 In quietude to flow.

Her voice was even, and her soul
 Reflected love, and where
She moved in grace, the hearts of all
 Bent down to look at her.

O happy hour in which I thought
 Of one so sweet and wise ;
And blessèd be the stream that made
 Her memory arise.

THE SURPRISE

THE day had been full of thoughts of her,
As a wood of the songs of birds ;
But the thoughts that flew through the woods of my heart
Sang sweet, but had no words.

Many were with me, and they said
That she was far apart ;
And I walked in the garden, midst of them all,
With a hunger in my heart.

And yet if I see her I may not speak
And she may never hear ;
' I suffer death and passion,' I said,
' Yet O that thou wert here.'

And there she stood ; O happy hour !

O sweet and fair surprise !

And I forgot myself, and looked

With love into her eyes.

Then I remembered, and my heart

Closed with a voiceless cry ;

But she had seen, and like a leaf,

She trembled, and so did I.

And now I have buried my passionate heart

Deep in the heart of the sea,

Would God I were drowned with it out of the world,

Since she may not abide with me.

IN VAIN

ALL was silent on the hill ;
Sorrow in my heart was still,
Passion for a moment slept.
Nature and her beauty crept
Into thought, and I felt then
Kindred with the world of men.
God was mine, and life and death
Interchanged—when in a breath,
Woods and streams and rocky height
Perished in a blinding light ;
Life and death and God were lost
Like three vessels tempest-tost ;
And in love's unknown abyss
I felt upon my lips her kiss.

SPEAK TO ME

WHEN I die, and in the deep
Of the earth lie fast asleep,
Come, my Sunlight, stand above,
In the air thou fill'st with love,
 My cold grave, and speak and say,
'Where art thou? Awake, rejoice,
 Fancy makes me thine to-day.'
And at thy belovèd voice
Fire will kindle in my dust ;
 I shall live, and breaking through
Earth, and death's encumbering crust,
 Young and passionate and true,
Fly into thine arms, and cry
 This is Immortality.

ALAS

LIKE a woman whom the frost
Of out-wearied age doth touch,
She had left me—she was lost
In a sorrow over-much.
Rest or life she could not find,
Withered by a bitter wind.

She came back one winter night,
After days of pain and grief,
When her eyes were without light,
And her brow was like a leaf
Wrinkled by December's hate,
'Love'—I said—'is love too late?'

Then I took her in my arms,
Spoke no word but held her fast,
And alas! the old alarms,
All her sorrow for the past,
Vanished like a mist away,
And she was happy as the day.

TOO LATE

HE came to-night, and talked with me
As if we never had been parted,
As if between us did not flow
The river of the faithless-hearted.

I listened, quiet, grave and cold,
But heard at last a little quiver
Within his voice ; I knew it well !
He thought of love he killed for ever.

And then, while he talked on, I mused—
‘ If all the woe could be forgiven,
If he could smile again for me,
Should I rejoice, would this be Heaven,

The Heaven of old? If by one word
I could that passion wild recapture,
Would I now speak it, and attain
His kiss, his love, and all its rapture?'

No, no, I thought; pain to the heart
Close-fitting like a burning glove,
The loneliest life the lost can dream
Is better than his deepest love.

THE DEATH OF LOVE

O WIND, between whose stormy gusts is peace,
Hear'st thou within my breast
Another wind that always doth increase
Its loud and wild unrest?

Thou comest from afar, and wanderest far,
And at the last art spent ;
But my great gale of love and wrath at war,
In one small heart is pent.

Beneath its ravaging raven wings my towers
Of love are blown to dust ;
The high-walled gardens filled with dew and flowers
In which I used to trust,

THE DEATH OF LOVE

And the green woodlands where her image walked
 Within my secret soul,
Wherein she sweetly laughed and sweetly talked,
 Are songless, sere and cold.

And in the central glade Love's body lies
 Slain by her own rough will ;
The skeleton leaves are blown across his eyes,
 And oh—his heart is chill.

I stand above my dead, and bend to kiss
 Love's lips—in vain, in vain !
And the wild wind in the forest is
 Not bitterer than the rain.

WOULD THOU WERT HERE

ONCE more I see this spreading Oak

Dapple the lawn with windy leaves,
And think how much we looked and spoke
In noonday hours and golden eves.

Silent the spot is now and sad,

Alone my footstep stirs the leaves,
The summer corn that once was glad
Is gathered into sheaves.

The garden calls thee, and my heart ;

How dull it seems, how cold, how still ;
Why didst thou come and why depart ?

When thou wert here, I thought no ill.
Alas, I never now forget,

Thy voice is always in my ear.
O was it good thou camest—yet
Would thou wert here.

A MOMENT

TO-DAY chance drove me to the wood,
Where I have walked and talked with her
Who lies in the earth's solitude.

The soft west wind, the minister
Of Love and Spring, blew as of old
Across the grass and marigold,
And moved the waters of the pool,
And moved my heart a moment—Fool!
Do I not know her lips are cold.

DESERT IS LIFE

‘DESERT is Life, its fates are flame,
Far off the foes we seek to quell ;
Lord, let us pause awhile—the march
In evening’s dew were just as well.’

‘Prophet of God,’ the Arabs cried,
‘The sun darts death on heart and head ;
Here rest till starlit night be cool’—
‘Hell is hotter’—Mohammad said.

LOST FOR EVER

O BLACK and bitter was the hour
 When my love died in me ;
Curst and forgotten be that day,
 And scorn its kingdom be.

Long, long the nights, the homeless hours,
 Silent my life's eclipse,
Since I have lain upon her breast,
 And kissed her on the lips.

Cold, cold and empty are my arms,
 Once warm around her heart ;
Lonely I live and voiceless work,
 She sleeps so far apart.

Deep in love's grave she, fortunate, rests,
But over sea and land
I wander crying out for her
Who cannot understand.

Where'er I am, she seems to be
In the next street or town,
And I am weary to the death
With roving up and down.

O stay for me, or find me ; break
Thy changeless silence deep ;
And give me endless love with thee
Or else the infinite sleep.

ASSOCIATION

I RESTED near the ruined shrine,
 And watched the peasants dance,
And the streamlet from the olive-grove
 Flash like a lover's glance.

The nightingale was singing loud
 Her joy at close of day ;
And England, thou, and all thy love,
 And fears, were far away ;

When from the ruddied crag I heard
 Athena's bird repine,
And the nightingale, the dance, grew still,
 The fountain ceased to shine.

And lo, I saw the Northern hills,
 And my forgotten love :
The dark lake lapped the mountain stones,
 And the cliff was black above.

That night the moon was full, and I
 Held Mary to my heart ;
'Nor life, nor death,' I said, 'shall set
 Thy kiss and mine apart.'

Then the owl hooted from the crag !
 'Be not too sure,' she said,
'That is Death's bird'—and in a year
 My singing bird was dead.

Since then, though I have lived and loved,
 And roamed o'er land and sea ;
What, if I think of her, is life
 Or other love to me ?

DOPPEL-GANGER

‘WHY is your face both pale and bright,
Your eyes as sad as clear,
Your work fulfilled, and yet unloved,
As if you were not here?’

‘When she I loved had said farewell,
All faith and joy fell dead ;
And I too died, and buried myself
Below the ocean’s bed.

Through fathomless seas I heard her voice,
“Wake to thy toil, arise,
Live, and forgive my death, forget
The lost love in my eyes.”

Then I arose, and breathed again,
 And found my work and place ;
But desolate is work ; it seems
 Lost in the vast of space.

And I who live again, am not
 The man I buried so deep ;
He is still dead, and in his heart
 Moves ever-restless sleep.

I am not he, yet night and day,
 His ghost doth visit me,
And then I know not who I am,
 Nor who, alas, is he.

He comes not always ; it were then
 Too sore a task to live !
His ruined eyes make sick my heart,
 I cannot then forgive.

Nor can I find in thought when I
 Shall be alone—and you
Would wish to be one person, not
 To be for ever two.

Now can you understand why work
 Is done, yet has no voice ;
Why I am pale, yet often bright,
 Am sad, yet can rejoice.

Two men are in me, one alive,
 And one a dreadful ghost ;
One half of life is rescued, risen,
 And one for ever lost.

One is a habitant of Heaven,
 And one of burning Hell—
O never, child, lose all you love,
 Or never love too well.'

THE VAPOUR OF FATE

THIS night, the chill mist, whitening from the vale,
Climbed to the hill top and the clump of thorn ;
And creeping through my garden, wet and pale,
Spread to the fields, and bent the golden corn.

It quenched the moonlight and the open heaven !
Below its heavy cere-cloth, fold on fold,
The earth was hidden like a corpse unshriven,
And all its dwellers shivered, and felt old.

So crawls, I said, misfortune upon men !
After long years, ill love, unhappy strife,
False thoughts, vile habit from the sensual den,
Weakness of will, make vain the use of life.

From whence the darkness gathered, who can tell?
Some passion-haunted face we longed to win,
Some dream-fed want, some fear we could not quell,
Some swift temptation holding years of sin.

And yet, when first it shaped itself, how bright,
How fair the little silver whirling wreath
Of valley vapour, coloured by the light
Of love or pleasure, ignorance or faith.

Youth saw it grow until it seized our will,
In manhood its grim habit wrapped us round ;
And now below its cere-cloth white and still,
Work, hope, and love of man, and God are drowned.

This mist of earth, in morning's glow, will rise
And melt to waving clouds with plumes of gold ;
But the long-gathered errors of our skies
Brood all the heavier as we grow more old.

NATURE AND LOVE

WHEN first I gave him all my love
I took the beauty of the world ;
Wild winds, and sunlight, stars above,
And clouds upon the mountains furled,

The life of waters and of woods,
The sweetness of the flowers and grass,
Dreams of the sunset, joyous moods
The spirit of the Summer has ;

I filled him with their soft romance,
I set my heart within its shrine ;
He saw the lovely countenance
Of Nature—and then turned to mine.

All, all I loved was given to him,
All, all he loved was shown to me ;
And then—that evening gray and dim,
The low moon burning o'er the sea,

He kissed me—I gave back his kiss,
My arms were round him, warm and fast—
'Is Nature more,' I cried, 'than this ?
Have I not conquered her at last ?'

Since then, he has loved, and loves, so much,
That in the grave men say is sleep,
He shall not lose my sweet wild touch
Through all the silence of the deep,

But, when the immortal passions move,
Shall quick arise, and with a cry,
Run to mine arms, and say, 'O Love,
Thou hast not forgotten—no, nor I.'

THE LOVE OF NATURE

I

Do you wish the love of Nature?
Love nor man nor woman
Passionately! for the Creature
Hides herself from all that's human.

II

Impose your moods on Nature, and the moods
Alone return to you! Her joyful ways,
Where great and solitary Beauty broods,
And makes the world—are hidden from your gaze.

But love her for herself, unfold your breast
To hear her music, and receive her fire—
You shall have joy, and beauty, and the rest
Of self-forgetfulness and dead desire.

BAVENO

A LITTLE lap of water on the beach
Is all the sound I hear,
A wavelet now and then that makes its speech
To moonlit mountains near.
The vast and rolling world and all its noise
Is hushed in perfect peace,
And with shut eyes I listen for a voice
That God has made to cease.
But still I only hear the ripple break
The silence of the earth.

O thou—who dwellest by the eternal lake
In the land of thy new birth,
Wilt thou not hear when Heaven is hushed to rest
Some ripple of my thought,
And close thine eyes, and muse, and wish, at last—

‘Would he were hither brought?’

I know not, for that silence has no speech,

That Ocean has no shore—

O faint-tongued ripple on the moonlit beach

Mock me with hope no more!

DEATH

My little hour of envied joy is past,
 My Love is dead ;
Deep in her grave my passionate arms hold fast
 Her wounded head ;
O could I lie beside her—even there
'Twere better than this earth and living air.

All children wonder that I never smile,
 Not mine their pain ;
The green trees and the streams I loved beguile
 In vain, in vain ;
Where, where is now my laughter, where her voice,
And her bright eyes that bade the woods rejoice ?

O silent dwelling, homeless world, sad heart,
 Always alone,
How canst thou live and bear thy bitter part
 Now she is gone ?
Clasp her cold heart to thine, and rise no more ;
Enough of loveless life—shut to the door.

CARPE DIEM

GOLDEN the woods, and far and near,
 We roamed the livelong day,
I wondered if I loved, and she
 Wondered I could delay.

But when the evening through the trees
 Went like a wandering fire,
I kissed her, but her kiss was cold,
 And wearied her desire.

‘Farewell,’ she said, and sad her smile
 Like wintry light in June ;
‘If you had kissed my lips before,
 I had not left so soon.’

KNOWLEDGE YET LOVE

POOR child ! who never couldst be true,
Whom a dream changes, and a breath
Of summer wind—who canst not be
Constant, until thou art with death.

Thou to whom love was but pursuit,
And attained passion swift retreat ;
Chance cause of joy and pain, whose heart
Wandered as vaguely as thy feet.

Come, when thou needest comfort, come !
And sing thine old wild spell,
And I will answer. I change not,
Thou knowest I love well.

LINES

IN the day the sun is darkened,
And the moon as blood,
And the earth is swept to ruin
On the avenging flood,
Come to me—Then give thyself
To my arms and kiss ;
We shall not know that all is lost,
So great shall be our bliss.

SUNSET AND VENICE

THIS perfect evening slowly falls
Without a stain, without a cloud ;
The sun has set—and all the bells
Of Venice in the skies are loud,

Clashing and chiming far and near
‘Ave Maria,’ while the moon,
Large-globed and red, climbs through the mist
To loiter o’er the dark lagoon.

And now the loud o’ermastering sound
Ceases, and silence, like a tide,
Flows o’er the shores of sea and sky,
And the gray earth is sanctified.

Beneath me the long gardens lie ;
Cool alleys trellised with the vine ;
And on the rustling mulberry-trees
Shadows the solitary pine.

Stone-black, it spreads against the fire
That westward reddens and above
Pales into gold and rose and pearl,
And then to azure, warm as love.

How sweet the air, how calm the eve !
How still the light, how still the pine !
But O the more I know their rest,
The more I feel it is not mine.

Great Nature loves our joy and calm ;
But to our restless scorn and grief,
Wild weariness of love, she gives
No tenderness, and no relief.

Unkind alas she is to me !
What has her heart to do with strife ;
'Seek peace,' she says, 'my law of peace.'—
I cannot, let me live my life.

NIGHT AND VENICE

THE moon is faint, the night is old,
The dawn will brighten soon ;
It is the loneliest, stillest hour
Upon the wide lagoon.

Far, like a midnight fallen asleep,
The smooth soft waters lie ;
And in their breast the trembling stars
Are deep as in the sky.

And now the great lake seemed to breathe,
A hushing sound went by,
Far off it rose, far off it died,
And I heard a fisher cry.

'O what,' I said, 'is moving deep,
Among the stars below,
What makes the silence thrill with sound
The waters heave and flow ?

It is the passion of my life
That breathes within the sea ;
O why is it in water and air,
And nevermore in me ?' .

HYLAS

I

WHO is this that in the morn
Blows upon his hunting horn,
Beautiful and young and gay
In the greenwood 'near the bay?
Underneath a cap of vair,
Curling, flowed his yellow hair ;
His light feet and smiling mouth,
Rosy cheek the sunny South
Touched and frighted fled, and eyes
Bluer, sweeter than the skies,
Made a joy within the wood.
In his hand a boar-spear good
Eager shook, and at his back
Hung a bow and quiver black.

Swift he went, accinct for speed ;
And with him, of fiery breed,
Rushed and bayed with joyous bounds
Two deep-jawed Molossian hounds.
This is Hylas, who on seas,
Tossed about with Hercules,
Weary of the waves at dawn,
Left the vessel safely drawn
By the Mysian rocks, and swore
He would kill a lusty boar.

II

While he ran, the sun leaped up,
And the valley like a cup
Filled with sunlight as with wine ;
Phœbus made the world his shrine.
Bird and beast, the earth and air
Hushed before the god in prayer,
And a moment Hylas stood
Awed and silent in the wood.
Then he roused a milk-white hind,
Swift as Iris on the wind :

Into light, and into shade,
Over hills, through glen and glade,
Flew the chase, and when the sun
Stood at noon, the chase was done ;
For the hind was Hera's care,
And she vanished it in air.
Then the hunter flung himself
On the naked mountain-shelf,
Parched, and hearing in his ear
Fountains splash and rivers clear ;
But his longing framed the sound,
All was dry as dust around ;
'I would give my life,' he cried,
'If my thirst were satisfied.'

III

At the word, he heard a cry
Glance him like an arrow by ;
'Hylas, Hylas !' and below,
A soft wind began to blow,
And the music of its horn
Scattered all the mists of morn.

Underneath his vantage-height
Lay a valley bathed in light ;
Dewy, deep in meadows, gay
With the blooms and birds of May.
And where three old olives stood,
By an awful laurel wood,
Welled a fountain of sweet sound
Bubbling o'er its liliated ground.
Near it danced the nymphs, and they,
Sang amid their robes of spray,
'Hylas, lovelier than the Dawn,
Flit to us across the lawn.'
When he saw the water flash
In the sun, and heard it splash,
He forgot the world, and Love,
Like a nest-returning dove,
Flew into his heart, and then
From cliff to cliff he reached the glen.

IV

Hylas hearing—'Follow, follow,'
Swifter than a hunting swallow,

Skimmed across the glistening dew.
But an Oread, as he flew,
Caught him by the skirt, and cried,
'I will be thy mountain bride ;
Stay with me.' 'There is no fountain,'
Hylas answered, 'on the mountain'—
And the Oread from that day
Wept her little life away.
On he ran, and reached the glade
Dappled by the olives' shade.
Lo ! the fountain leaped no more,
Though the flower-enamelled floor,
Round about the rocky rim,
With its spraying still was dim,
Though the dancers' footprints yet
On the emerald moss were wet.
O'er the rim he leaned and saw
Bubbling waters upward draw,
And among their crystal crests
Snowy shoulders, rounded breasts,
Lifted arms, and faces bright
With a dancing water-light.

v

Then Nycheia, with the Spring
Looking through her eyelids' ring,
Sprang, all naked, on the top
Of the waves' inverted cup ;
And the water at her feet
Pulsing, made a sound so sweet,
Hylas felt another fire
Added to his thirst's desire.
'Come'—she cried, and stretched her arms
Full of hope of love's alarms,—
'Come, thou wearied of the seas,
Hylas, loved of Hercules,
Nestle with us like a dove,
We are sleepless for thy love.
Deep our dwelling, cool and kind,
Undisturbed by frost or wind,
And Apollo's rays burn not
In our beryl-flashing grot ;
Come, but wouldst thou quench thy thirst,
Stoop to me, and kiss me first.'

So superb and white she shone
Poised upon her fountain-cone,
So begemmed her bosom fair
With dewdrops, so warm her hair,

VI

That he stooped—and when his mouth
Kissed her, he was free from drouth,
And repented, but in vain—
For the daughter of the rain
Drew him to her spherèd breast ;
While the nymphs, her comrades, prest
Round him, singing—‘ Close enlure
And whirl him downwards in our whirl.’
Sighing, Hylas cried—‘ Ah me !
Whither, Naiads, bear ye me ?
Farewell earth and sun and sky,
And the chase through forests high ;
Home farewell, and agèd sire,
Games, and feasts beside the fire ;
Farewell comrades on the seas,
Farewell, farewell Hercules.’

So he sank, and nevermore
Saw the ship or slew the boar.
Then the fountain leaped again,
Joyously, and flung its rain
Into sunlight, o'er the grass ;
And the ancient goddesses
In the laurel grove were glad ;
Only the great dogs were sad,
Baying by the olive-trees ;
And sadder still was Hercules.

THE FAUN AND THE DRYAD

THE Faun met the Dryad and said, 'I have slept
Under thy tree,
Wilt thou love me?'

But the Dryad said, 'Thou shouldst not have slept ;
Love has no leisure,
Wake to its pleasure ;
Night has gone, and the Dawn
Gleams on the lawn.

Farewell, foolish Faun.'

ENDYMION

DIAN hunting through the woods,
 Emptied all her quiver,
And the evening overtook her
 By a mountain river.
All her Nymphs were far away
Wearied ere' the noonday ;
Who could vie in speed with her
Who runs along the moon-ray ?
Softly flowed the river by,
And the flowering meadows
Rang with laughter of the Nymphs
In the water-shadows.
Sweet and low and gay the chime,
And the Dryads from the trees
Laughed in answer, and detained
In their arms the wanton breeze.

When the Goddess came, they knew her
By her stately walking ;
And they feared—and all the laughter,
All the happy talking,
Fell to silence. Far and near,
Dian only heard the motion
Of her brother's chariot wheels
Whirling to the Ocean.
And enamoured of the peace,
And the secret of the glade,—
On the grass that burst in flowers,
All her lovely body laid.
Soon she fell asleep, and near her
Watched her dog, and when she moved
Licked her hand—O was there none
Who should love her or be loved ?

Scarcely had she fallen asleep,
When the young Endymion, who
On the mountain kept his sheep,
Homeward drove his fleecy crew—
Swift as light the Goddess rose,
Anger in her glance divine !

But the boy was innocent,
And his eyes began to shine.
'Who art thou?' he said, and smiled,
'One of the great Gods who move
On the dread Olympus top!
Take a simple shepherd's love;
I will build an altar here,
Milk and honey every morn
I will bring, and in the eve,
Flowers thy footsteps shall adorn.'

On the Huntress' brow the frown
Faded, and a pleasure grew
In her eyes of violet:
For the boy was brave and true,
And in loveliness so wise,
That he filled the living air
With the childhood in his eyes.
So she paused; but unaware,
And unarmed, she did not see
Cupid, who on azure wing
Fluttered o'er her, nor the Nymphs
Peeping till he loosed the string.

Silently the laughing God
Drew the bowstring, and the dart,
Conscious of its glorious goal,
Flew with joy and pierced her heart.

Dian felt the pleasing pain,
But she knew not what it meant ;
For the driver of the Moon
Of all love was innocent.
But the lore of love is learnt
 In a moment, in a breath,
And the Goddess touched the youth—
 ‘Shepherd, thou wert near to death ;
But because thy heart is high,
And because I love thee well,
When the moon is full to-night,
Be in Latmos’ deepest dell.’
Then she fled away, all rose.—
But Endymion in amaze,
Left his sheep and instant sought
Latmos by the darkest ways.
As he went, the moon stepped up
O’er the hilltop, and the boy

Felt his heart, he knew not why,
Overflow with love and joy!

Who can tell what happened then
When they met within the glen?

PROTEUS

PROTEUS in his cavern lying,
Said—‘I am the changing sea !
Men go roving, wandering, loving,
Laughing, working, idling, dying,
Yet they never can discover
Who can change like me.’

When a Nereid on him tending
Said—‘O master, near the cave
Fares a maiden, fancy-laden,
And beside her, lowly bending,
Walks her young, enamoured lover
Whispering like the wave.

Underneath the rosy mountains
Of her youthful breast

More of changing now is ranging
Than thy waves and restless fountains
In a thousand years—old Rover,
 Make in storm and rest.'

Then the Shepherd of the waters
 Angry answered—' Only you,
Sweet Sea-Coldness, have the boldness,
Out of all old Nereus's daughters,
Such a secret to discover—
 Silence—it is true.'

PHŒBUS THE HERDSMAN

PHŒBUS, shepherding the herds
Of Admetus, loved a woman ;
 Like a rose she was in hue.
Soft-voiced like the little birds,
Quick, engaging, not inhuman,
 And more fresh than morning dew.

Swift the Godhead wooed, but slow
Came her answer—yet at last
 All the woman yielded. Then
Songs like streams began to flow,
Sweet, so clear, the birds that passed
 Told their tune from glen to glen.

Long Apollo lived in joy ;
But the woman in her heart
 Wearied of the songs divine.

And she took a rustic boy,
Drew him from the rest apart,
 Taught him love, and said—‘Be mine.’

Phœbus from the hilltop saw,
And he piped so sad a song
 Every shepherd hung his head ;
But the music that could draw
E’en the rudest beasts along,
 O’er the woman fruitless fled.

‘Shall I venge me?’ said Apollo,
‘Slay the village lout and her
 With an arrow from my quiver?’
When a voice cried, ‘Shepherd, follow!’
And he saw a Naiad stir
 In the willows of the river.

Arch and young and gay her face ;
And the Godhead with a leap
 Sprang into her open arms.
Gone was now his love’s disgrace !
And at morn, among his sheep,
 Piped a fresher love’s alarms.

Lad and lass who heard the tune,
Had a joy in love tenfold ;

 But the woman heard it not.
Nevermore, by sun or moon,
Did she list the notes of gold ;
 And the God her name forgot.

GLAUCON

'GLAUCON, the mountain bees renew their quest,
The soft West wind blows ripples on the sea,
The swallow rounds with care her clay-built nest,
Winter is dead, and flowery Spring is free.

Now lift the lingering anchor, seize the oar,
Cry—"Cast the cable loose, unfurl the sails,"
For favouring winds the fortunate gods implore,
And change, from isle to isle, the merchants' bales.'

'No friend, my ship is laid
In port, no more afraid
Of shattering seas,
Content, at ease.

In toils and storms I've sailed,
And known a world.
Henceforth, my hand
Fast holds the land ;
Anchored at home I live
With sails close furled.'

‘ Dangerous the sea, to live at home is wise,
But home is homeless without child and wife !
And see where Chrysis walks, with downcast eyes,
Young, prudent, noble, of a blameless life.

The poplars round the clear stream at her feet
Are not more straight nor is the stream more fair ;
To love a woman for a man is meet,
And Greece will praise the sons that she shall bear.’

‘ No friend, nor this for me !

I have escaped that sea.

He who has known

And made his own

One woman through and through

Has known a world.

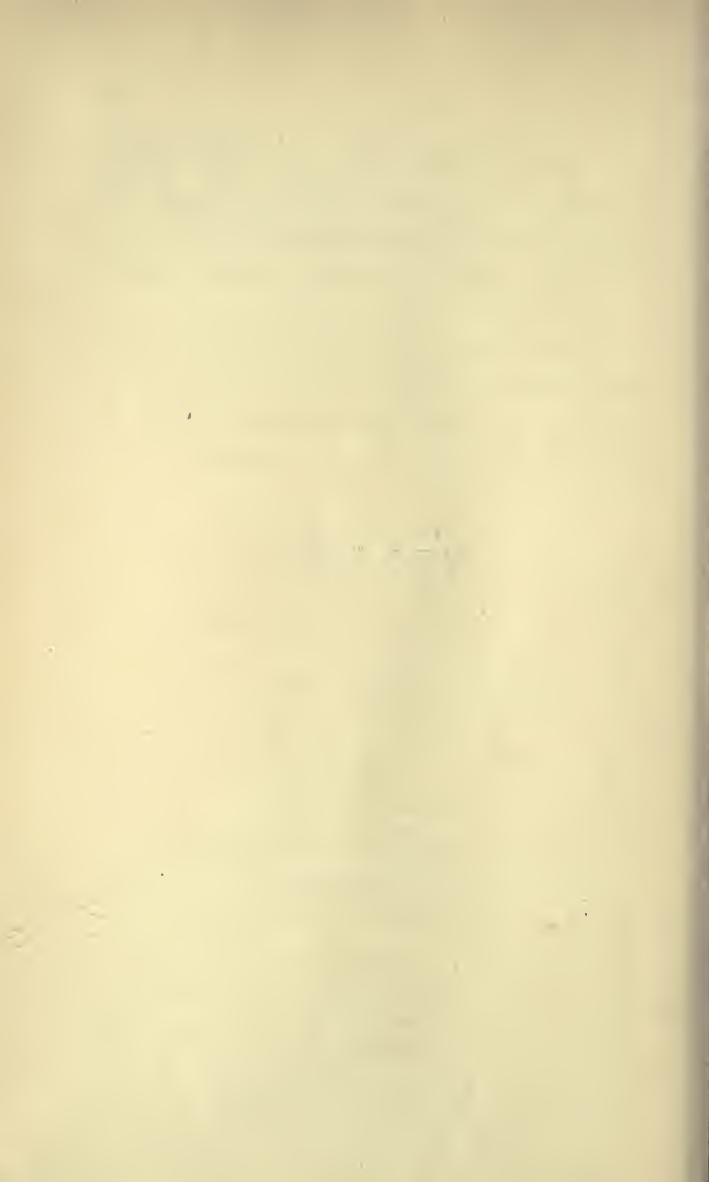
But after that,

’Twere well he sat

Still in a nest of thought,

With wings close-furled.’

VENICE



SAILING TO VENICE

MESTRE at last, and on the dead-lagoon

The morning glows ; I leave the train behind,
And ere San Marco's figures hammer noon,
I shall reach Venice, sailing with the wind.

The boat is ready, and we brush the edge

Of islets clustered in the brackish marsh,
Fringed with low trees that wave o'er whispering sedge,
And gray with lavender and thistles harsh.

And now the channel broadens, and we break

Out of the dead into the live-lagoon—
A lover-haunted, storied, sea-born lake,
Fit mirror for the sunset and the moon.

The motion in it of the tidal deep,
Of sailing clouds, the winds that breathed it o'er,
Stirred it, but yet it ever seemed asleep,
A long-lost sea that washed a faery shore.

And dreamlike, hung in air above its breast,
Green, towered islands, curving like a bow,
On bars of silver sunshine lay at rest,—
Soft shores that lonely fancy longed to know.

And now beyond the glittering shifting water,
Mist-veiled, her domes like Alps that fret the sky ;
Heart of the seas, their Queen, their lovely daughter,
Rose Venice, and I saw her with a cry—

A cry unheard, save in the depths within,
Heart-breaking, piteous, deep ; so eloquent
Of passionate pain no time can medicine,
That with its sound I thought my strength was spent.

Two years have passed since Thou wert here with me
Who now a hundred thousand fathoms deep
Liest in some unknown valley of the sea ;
And love has never found the way to break thy sleep.

Yet I have called upon thee night and day ;
The stars have pitied me : the waking morn
Kept silence with my sorrow : noontide gray,
And sunset when the evening star was born,

Shed comfort ; but the fierce Atlantic cried—
‘ I yield her not, she sleeps with me alone ;
Though Earth and Air be with thy grief allied,
My love was strongest—and I keep mine own.’

So beaten with incredible despair,
I came, tormented, to the gate of death,
And knocked for entrance—but so soft an air
Flowed from that world within, it seemed the breath

Of perfect life ; and in the air a voice,
Most like her voice I loved, was clear, and said,
‘ Live and take courage—thou shalt yet rejoice,
For I am thine, and living are the dead.

’Tis for a little while, and then we meet,
To live within His love who is our peace ;
But now, seek Venice where our life was sweet,
There shall the weakness of thy trouble cease.’

Wherefore I come, obedient to her cry,
To these sad waters, hoping some relief—
But if in losing pain, my love should die,
Or memory lessen, I will keep my grief.

Yet pain, they say, can pass, and passing, make
Love brighter,—as when bolted cloud and levin
Lift from the shoulders of a mountain peak,
And leave it absolute mistress of the heaven.

Alas ! I cannot reach this lofty height ;
Grief is too passionate, all too close a guest ;
What if the years to come be full of light,
The darkness of the past is in my breast.

LIDO

HITHER I come, like one who walks midst graves,
To see the place where first I called her mine !
Landing, I hear the far-off roar of waves,
And the gust brings the sea-sand and the brine.

The wild Scirocco hunt is up to-day ;
Clouds chasing clouds are plunging through the heaven,
Unbitten horses from whose wrath and play
Slant rain and whirlwind and red fire are driven.

While down the leaf-strown path I sad devise,
The gulls wheel shrieking o'er the sodden land,
Mocking my heart—I crest the little rise,
And lo ! the thundering beach and driving sand.

Is this the Adriatic, that the sea
I knew in happier time—this furious cry
Of terror-stricken waters, whose wild plea
For peace from pain and passion cleaves the sky ?

Wave-eaten wood, crushed shells and weed upturn
From ocean's forest, on the shore are thrown ;
But on my shore, in wilder wreckage borne,
Hopes, youth, and love and work are shattered strown.

Oh, when I came with her, the month was June,
Summer in my heart, and summer in the air ;
Clear as hill water gleamed the afternoon,
And fair the world, but she was still more fair.

Long had I wooed her, and she heard me speak
With changing smile and blush and shadowed eyes ;
But now Love's long impatience reached its peak,
'This day,' I thought, 'shall be my fall or rise.'

At morn, I claimed her—'Come, and see,' I said,
'The Jewish graves, on Lido, all forgot.'
Alone we went, and stood among the dead—
A water-whispered, wild, neglected spot.

Broken, upturned, half-buried in the grass,
Deep-cut with Hebrew, were the slabs of stone ;
The careless centuries above them pass,
This people, said their poet, dwell alone.

But the sea-winds are with them—and the flowers
Love the deep sand where silent they repose ;
The dwarf acacia builds their waving bowers,
And o'er them bends the blossom of the rose.

'A sad, fair place,' she said. 'Above each tomb
Sweet smells the wild rose, soft the grasses wave !
These love and judge not, but as gladly bloom
Over the Jewish as the Christian grave.

And see, the host of golden butterflies !
Are they the souls, in this delightful heaven,
Of the poor dead whom God has bid arise,
In beauty—since on earth they were unshriven ?'

While thus she spoke, so lovely flushed her cheek,
So pure and young and good she was, that I,
Thrilled with Love's passionate reverence, could not speak,
But took her hand and kissed it tenderly.

Blushing, she understood, and slowly moved
Her hand from mine, so slowly that my heart
Leaped with the thought that haply I was loved—
That she and I should never be apart.

Silent we went—the silence of an earth
That waits creative Love was mine that hour—
And through the meadows where the breeze makes mirth
And music in the white acacia bower,

Reached the smooth sands where each low-lisping wave,
Foam-edged and opening like a mermaid's fan,
Played with the shining shells, and softly drave
The golden weed in front of it a span,

Then passed the bathing place, and left behind
Our footprints on the salt verge of the flood,
And came where round the bastion, in the wind
The stream of poppies flowed as red as blood.

And there we sat upon the silver shore,
And there I took her hand and told my tale,
And there she answered—‘ Yes, I love you more
Than all the world.’—O what can words avail !

I wander now upon a wintry shore,
And in my heart is this tempestuous sea !
What I have lost, I’ve lost for evermore,
But O ’twas all infinity to me !

TORCELLO

HERE too among Torcello’s fields and flowers,
We spent, with many happy folk, the day ;
Bright shone the sun, and gaily fled the hours,
And sad it is to think we were so gay.

The morning heaven was fair when gliding by
Murano's walls we saw the broad lagoon,
Holding within its depths a softer sky,
Open its bosom to the sun of June ;

And, sweeping round the green, low-lying lawn,
The castled Alps, by clouds and storm beloved,
Rose blue in azure, and beneath them drawn,
Long lines of silver mist streamed unremoved.

The wind had made the unnumbered wavelets smile,
The sail was set, and merrily we flew
Along the channel, past the lonely isle,
Where in the marsh St. James's worship grew ;

Then through Mazzorbo where the tower stands,
Shot through the heart, and the brown cypress-tree
Looks forth, a lonely sentinel, o'er the sands—
Watching till Venice wed again the sea.

Till at the last, slow oaring through the sedge,
Mid alders and the married vine and maize,
We pushed beneath Torcello's ruined bridge ;
And landed where the jonquils were ablaze.

Grass-grown the steps ; by shattered stone and quay
The weary gray-haired water crept along ;
We heard the scythe among the meadows sway,
And out at sea a lonely fisher's song.

A straggling farmhouse clambered by the vine
Stood where a palace once o'erlooked the square,
And midst the grass a well of grave design
Basked in the sunlight near the marble chair,

Brought from the mainland for the Bishop's throne,
Sole, sorrowful relic of departed rule ;
The children made the meadow all their own
With dark eyes deeper than a mountain pool.

Beyond, the rock-hewn grim Cathedral rose,
For God and refuge built. And its gray tower
Looked out, and flared, and clashed its bells, when foes
From land and sea advanced their pirate power.

Hard by, its daughter, Santa Fosca, stood,
A round church clasped in porch of octagon,
Pillared and carved the porch, of marble good,
But those who carved and worshipped—all are gone.

Yet what we change and ruin, Nature loves,
She has a pity where we have it not,
And o'er Torcello's wild sea-fields she moves,
Flowers in her breast to bless the mournful spot.

Roses are there, fruit blossoms, lilies cool,
Pale glittering pinks, scarlet pomegranate blooms,
Field flowers as wild as children out of school,
And white acacias near the vineyard glooms.

Salt pools that hold the clouds within their breast,
Green meadows sweet above the forgotten dead,
The yellow butterflies that never rest,
And the majestic Heaven overhead.

And seaward, shallow sands and water lanes
Watch the wood-raft and fruit-piled barge pass by.
The white gulls feed in flocks, the whooping cranes
Lift their gray-sworded wings and cleave the sky.

We saw, we loved it, left it, climbed the tower,
And stood within the belfry, whence of old
Rang o'er a populous town the vesper hour;—
The bells are silent and the folk are cold.

And there we shaped the past, my Love and I ;—
The burning mainland, and the hurried flight,
The muddy sea-bank 'neath the inclement sky,
The crowded boats, the campment through the night ;
The fearful worship in the morning hour,
The hutted island, and the search for food,
The slow upgrowth of peace and thought and power,
Courage that gained and strength that kept the good.

We built the church and city, wrought its quay,
Talked with its merchants, heard its bells resound,
Knew it in honour, pitied its decay,
And saw it levelled even with the ground ;—

O sad our heart to think how much was gone ;
Love, work and knowledge, faith and brave men's lives,
Blown far by death—but still the race lives on,
In the stern battle still the best survives.

For leagues away, superb in glittering water,
Tower and temple flashing sunset, Venice smiled—
'There rests,' she said, 'Queen History's fairest
daughter ;'—

And by the Vision thought was long beguiled.

At last, gold-garmented, soft evening step ·
Over the purple mountains, while the moon
Flashed o'er the Lido—and Torcello slept.
'Farewell,' we cried, 'lone child of the Lagoon.'

So made more tender by the fates of men,
We, rowing homeward, felt great Nature move
Within our hearts. I kissed her lips, and then,
We knew, remembered, nothing but our love.

SUNSET

THE autumn evening dies, and all the west
Is warm soft gold to half the heaven's height ;
And in the silent air I float and rest
On waters that are lovers of the light.

The clear curved dome of the Redeemer's Church
Is black against the yellow arch of sky ;
And purple-peaked within the sunset's porch,
The Euganean hills like islands lie—

Children of Padua, but to Venice friends !

Who that has seen them in the evening hour,
But has forgotten earthly cares and ends,
All things but Love that never loses power ;

And from St. George among the Seaweed, set
A sapphire isle in golden waters, down
To the Armenian Convent where the fret
Of the sea winds has turned the cypress brown,

The spacious waters in full tide are spread,
A lustrous cloth of gold with colour splashed ;—
Blue liquid belts and mirrored clouds blood-red,
Green blazing sea-marsh, broidered waves that flashed

Now ebony, now scarlet, when the tide,
Smoothing the ripple on the shallow's rim,
Flowed strong to southward where, in towered pride,
Islanded Venice sang her evening hymn.

How calm, how passionless, how golden-fair !
Beauty, I thought, stood tiptoe on his height—
When down the near canal, and tossed in air,
Two lofty sails moved slow athwart the light ;

And their tall masts and soaring booms aslope,
 Were sky-companions of the lonely dome,
That on Giudecca bids the sinner hope,
 And seen from Malamocco speaks of home.

The moving sails, the thought of ocean's life,
 The sense of human will within the ship,
Enriched the peace with which they seemed at strife,
 And filled the cup of Beauty to the lip.

O Thou, who wast beside me when we loved
 This vision of the evening and the sea ;
Why art thou silent, why so far removed ?
 Implore of Death, ask God to set thee free.

NIGHT

Now night is here, and all the stars step forth
 Each with his lamp alit ; Orion fills
The East with splendour, and within the North
 Capella flames above the misty hills.

All things are silent, waiting for thy voice ;
It cannot be but thou wilt come at last.
Long hast thou left me—bid me now rejoice ;
Come and renew the unforgotten past.

Come, for the spirits of the sea and air
Are one in love—come thou in equal love ;
Come as thou camest when our fates were fair,
Before they envied me my bliss above.

The starlit ocean calls thee and the night,
And I—I call thee to my heart. O come,
Clad in thy passionate love as Heaven with light !
Homeless is earth without thee, blind and dumb.

Come with the glow that lit thy long-loved eyes,
The kiss that warmed my lips ; I wait for thee,
Our well-known hour is here, the golden skies
Have changed to darkness of the deep blue sea—

The warm soft darkness that we knew so well !
Full orbs the moon above the Lido's mouth,
Red as a fire, and o'er the sandy swell
The wind is rushing from the rainy South,

And in the wind thou knowest we were one.

But now, alone, alone! No fisher's hut
Far in the dead-lagoon is more alone.

Hast thou no care for me? Has Heaven shut

Thy heart to passion? Break, O break the spell

That holds thee from me, come alive or dead,
And speak, at last, one word to me, and quell
This unforgetful thirst of heart and head.

In vain, in vain, I know thou wilt not speak ;

The boundless silence is unbroken ever.

Far, far away, I hear the billow break

Behind the Lido, crying—'Never, never.'

SAN FRANCESCO DEL DESERTO

Two years have gone since on this desert place

We landed, she and I, alone, at one ;

But now the wild sea-marshes have no grace,

For she who made their beauty—she is gone.

That day the island in the afternoon

Shone like a gem, and on its point the pine
Kept steadfast watch, while in the clear lagoon
Unwavering lay the shadow and the shrine.

‘How lonely,’ so she said, ‘how still, how fair !
Tell me the story why they call the place
St. Francis of the Desert. Silent air,
And silent light sleep here, and silent space.’

‘Once in his wanderings,’ thus I told the tale,
‘St. Francis, overtaken by the night,
Pushed here his bark to shore and furled his sail,
And wearied, slumbered till the morning light.

He woke, and saw his brother, the great Sun
Rise up, full-orbed, refreshed, to praise the Lord,
And so began the Matins : “Is there none
To sing,” he said, “responses?” At the word,

The nightingale, the blackbird and the thrush,
And all the little fowl with dancing notes,
Perched joyous on the low acacia bush,
Whereby he knelt, and with full-swelling throats

Sang a clear service like the boys in quire ;
 And Francis, happy as a child, gave thanks
To those sweet children of the heavenly Sire—
 Hence grew this shrine upon the wan seabanks.'

The story pleased her ; and the low-roofed church,
 The brick-paved cloister set with balsams round,
The marble well, and silence-guarded porch,
 The cypresses that clasped the garden ground,

The soft-leaved poplars rippling in the air,
 The white narcissus tufts beneath the trees,
And the lonely waters whispering everywhere ;
 The blue sky filled to brimming with the breeze

That drove the red-sailed barks along the wave—
 All pleased, but most the silent solitude ;
The still Franciscan walking slow and grave,
 The absent life wherein no cares intrude,

Obedient, chaste and poor—alone with sea
 And sky and clouds and winds and God's still voice ;
Unvexèd by the clamorous world, and free
 For worship and for work, to die or to rejoice.

'I would not choose,' she said, 'this quiet life ;
But if my wheels were broken in the race,
If, having done my best, I failed in the strife,
It would be well to work in this sweet place.

But you and I are one—our hopes and need,
Our joy and love are in the world of men ;
Let fall the sail and bid the rowers speed,
Life calls aloud—Back to the city then.'

So spake she, bathed in sunshine and delight,
Her hand upon the wooden cross whose shade
Falls on the landing-place. She was so bright
That when I looked on her I was afraid.

Good cause for fear—one little month and then
Dark Ocean quenched her light, and now once more
I see this island in the salt sea-fen,
And think what joy, what love I had of yore.

'Twas summer then and glorious afternoon,
And now 'tis autumn and a dusky eve ;
Night rushes swiftly o'er the pale lagoon,
The wet seaweed and lapping waters weave

A mournful song together, and I walk
 Beneath the solemn cypress-trees alone ;
High overhead the tinkling poplars talk
 Of me, and wonder where my love has flown.

I cannot tell them, I have never heard ;
 My boat has drawn unto a silent shore ;
But could she speak to me one little word,
 Or could I hope to love her evermore,

Then I might see the sun arise, and sing
 Matins of praise, like Francis, o'er the sea ;
And every happy bird upon the wing,
 And all the angels, would rejoice with me.

SANTA ELENA

WITHIN my heart is echoing the cry
That yestereve I heard—'Our work,' she said,
'Our hopes are with the world of men,'—yet I,
Since I have lost her, have been as the dead.

Last night, in dreams, I saw again the isle
Of Francis in the Desert, and above
The path she came by shone her brightening smile.
Rose-red her robe, of rippling fire ; God's love

Was light and life in her. Glorious she stood
Beneath the Cross and to her feet I came.
The isle, the waters and the solitude
Flashed in the joy that flowed from her like flame.

Upwards she gazed, intent, to God on high,
Then turned on me her deep reproachful eyes ;
'Shame to lie thus entombed,' she seemed to cry,
'When God and Man are calling—"Wake, arise !"'

Words that have been like trumpets in the dawn
To sleeping soldiers on a battle day ;
So that the Virtues that had slept withdrawn,
Now waking, stand alert, in armed array ;

Each calling with her voice—'Come, lead us forth,
Our strength against your sloth's oppression prove ;
The star of duty burns within the north,
Follow its light and thou shalt find thy Love.'

Therefore to Santa Elena I go,
To hear, in memory's hall, again her voice !
The day is fair ; so soft the waters flow,
For this brief hour I would I might rejoice.

I pass the Public Gardens where the breeze
Sways the red sails of fishing-boats arow ;
And see ! the Gothic chapel hid in trees,
And now, the little landing-place I know.

And this the isle I love, a saintly rest !
Saddest and fairest of the precious gems
The Bride of Venice wears upon her breast ;
Named by her name who bore the diadems

Of East and West—O here as evening fell,
We sat within the shattered cloister's square,
Listening the sounds that in its precinct dwell,
The lap of water and the wash of air.

Soft waved the large acacias to and fro ;
Through the arched gate into the garden flowed
The sun-drawn incense of all flowers that blow
In golden June, but chief, the rose that glowed

In England, when she kissed it! Vervain sweet
Stood in brown pots around the cloister's ledge :
The gardener and his wife on sculptured seat
Murmured their talk, like wind among the sedge.

Wandering from arch to arch, a sunlit vine
Flung its green tendrils, orbed its clustered gold ;
Below the pillars grew warm eglantine,
And o'er the wall, wild rose and ivy old.

Midst of the paven court, a well was set,
With carven foliage of the vine o'errun,
And on its rim, a copper bowl, still wet
With dropping water, blazed dark red in the sun.

So deep, so agèd was the peace, it seemed
Fit for those only whose delights are dead,
Who looking backward think that they have dreamed,
And say—' My waking comes when life is fled.'

Therefore we rose, and through the garden went,
Where the elm whispered and the sycamore,
And from the angle of the sea-wall leant,
Beneath a bay-tree that full flowerage bore.

The high embowered Heaven, the sheeted sea,
The mainland far outspread, the flamelike hills,
Kindled her eyes—‘For you,’ she said, ‘for me,
There is another world than that which fills

The cloister’s peace. Infinity is ours :
See, it expands before us unconfined !
Promise to give the future all your powers,
Work hand and heart with me ; call on the Wind

Ezekiel shook the dead with : wake mankind
To faith and hopes and thoughts that cannot die.
Who wrought our law of life, its range defined—
“ My Father worketh hitherto, and I.” ’

So spoke she, and my lips retain the kiss
With which she pledged me to this purpose high—
O that my bane should shelter in such bliss,
And life be fullest when most near to die !

How have I kept the compact ? Death could not
Dissolve its duties, and her part in Heaven
Is surely done—but I on earth forgot
Mine in a grief which needs to be forgiven.

I lived within the cloister of my sorrow ;
Like this—a lovely, lonely, ruined place.
What cared I for the interests of To-morrow,
What for the aims and fortunes of the Race ?

This was my weakness, this my crime. ‘In Heaven,
Where now thou art with Beatrice, O pray
That this my sin of love may be forgiven :
Then, in thine eyes, the uncreated Ray

Of universal Love receive, and fall
One fire-flake of its glory on my heart ;
So shall I love thee best in loving all,
And see thee, though I know not where thou art.’

So praying in an ecstasy, I left
The cloister’s space, and from the garden wall
Saw where the large lagoon in sunset slept :—
The moon was walking in the heavenly hall,

Pale as a spirit, and the sea and air,
Conscious of being, passed me slowly by.
Silence sat throned, and silent was my prayer—
‘O my Belovèd, hear thy Lover’s cry.’

DAWN AND DEPARTURE

THAT night I could not sleep, and when the dark
Dipped towards the dawn, and the belated moon
Downdropt, I made a Sandolo my ark,
And rowed into the weary waste lagoon.

Through the Giudecca passed the silent boat,
Among the sleeping ships, and only heard
The tide run rippling round the vessels' throat,
And high o'erhead the calling of a bird.

And so into the vast and whispering lake,
Around 'St. George among the Weed' I came,
Whose tower and canopied Madonna take
Red gleams when Morning's fingers scatter flame.

Dark was the night as yet ; I ceased to row,
And leaning downwards, saw another sky ;
Calm stars that shone in infinite depths below—
Unnumbered fires—and heard the sea-lake sigh,

As the great pulse of the tide moved through its sleep—
The thoughts that Nature gave me in that hour
I could not shape, but their quick seeds I keep,
Till in the wiser life they come to flower.

What time went by I know not, but the night
Began to tremble with desire, and soon,
Only the larger stars were seen when light
Gray as wood-ash swept over the lagoon.

This was the pale forerunner of the dawn ;
Then flushed the East above the sandy bar,
And o'er the shivering flush, heaven's upper lawn
Brightened to azure-pearl—and there the Star

Of Morning, in that ever-reddening air,
Hung like a lamp, in holy apse, alone ;
While in the violet waters, fairy-fair,
Its dying delicate silver javelin shone.

I felt the expectant world, I heard the cry
For the Sun's head from every living thing ;—
'Why dost thou tarry in the under sky,
Splendour of life and love, our Lord and King?'

And in my heart, as in the earth and sea,
Hope waiting thrilled, with past despair at strife—
'Come to me also, Light,' I cried—'O be
The passionate spirit of a new-born life.

But with that Light, come thou, my crownèd love,
Disclose the glory of thy soul in Heaven ;
Confirm the thoughts and prayer that in me move ;
Speak to me, say I have not vainly striven.'

Then rose the cloud-bars curving to a bridge ;
Flame—darting, flickering like the lightning's tongue—
Incensed its arc with gold ; and from the ridge
Of Adria's hornèd waves, in pulses sprung

Billows of light that formed and filled the arch,
Beneath whose keystone now came on the Sun !
Whirling he rose, and 'gan his glorious march,
And round him spheres of fire concentric spun.

Soon he stood sovereign on the Lido sand !
And, flashing down, a golden path of sea,
Broad as his head and blazing like a brand,
Lit the lagoon and reached at last to me.

Dazzled I gazed, and lost the sense of earth ;
When lo ! partaker, mistress of the flame,
Of it and by it, native to its birth,
Out of the Sun and down his path—she came.

No longer clad in red, but in white fire
Of righteousness, and from her shoulders flew
Backward her robe with speed of her desire,
And at her feet gold changed to burning blue.

Outspread her arms with love, and on her face
Joy and approval shone—and brightened fast,
As near, more near she flew, to such a grace -
I felt my wound was healed, my sorrow past.

I stretched my arms to her and spoke no word,
Then on my lips I felt her kiss rejoice,
More dear than I remembered, and I heard,
Sweeter than angels fluting praise, her voice.

‘Well hast thou thought,’ she said. ‘In Heaven above
Thy prayer is heard, our wedding-day is near ;
Live now for God and Man, and for my love.
In grief is death, in Joy abides no fear,

No weakness and no trouble. I will wait
Thy coming in God’s will, and on the night
Death shall release thee—at the espousal gate
My love shall meet and lead thee into Light.’

The vision past, and long entranced I lay !
But when I woke, the sun was near the noon ;
Within me brooded Joy’s immortal day,
And Peace walked singing o’er my heart’s lagoon.

A sweet, triumphant song ! And when that night
Crossing the Palace square, I reached the quay,
San Marco’s lion watching from his height,
His foot upon his gospel, seemed to say

‘Thou art forgiven.’ Silent I heard and gave
Deep thanks to God who bids our trouble cease ;
Then in the breathless moonlight heard the wave
Wash by a glimmering music, full of peace.

The morn saw my departure : 'O farewell,
Venice,' I cried, 'dim dreamer of the Sea !
Life is, like thee, a city where we dwell
Among the waters of Eternity.'

THE END

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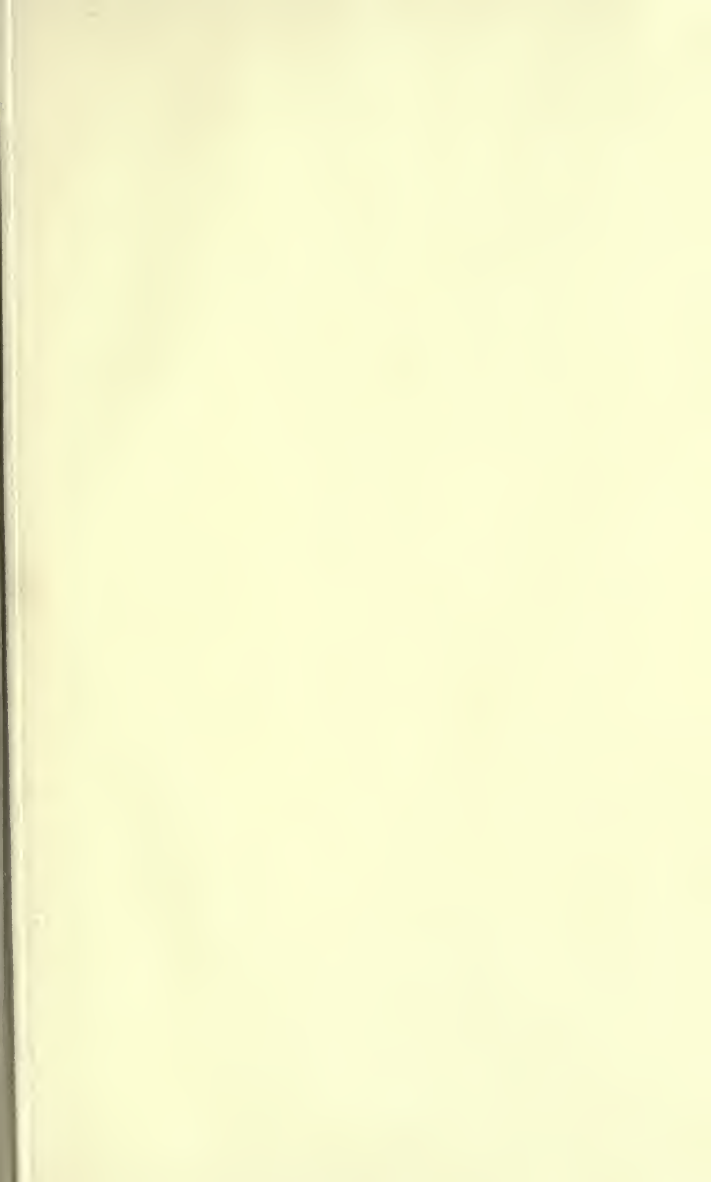
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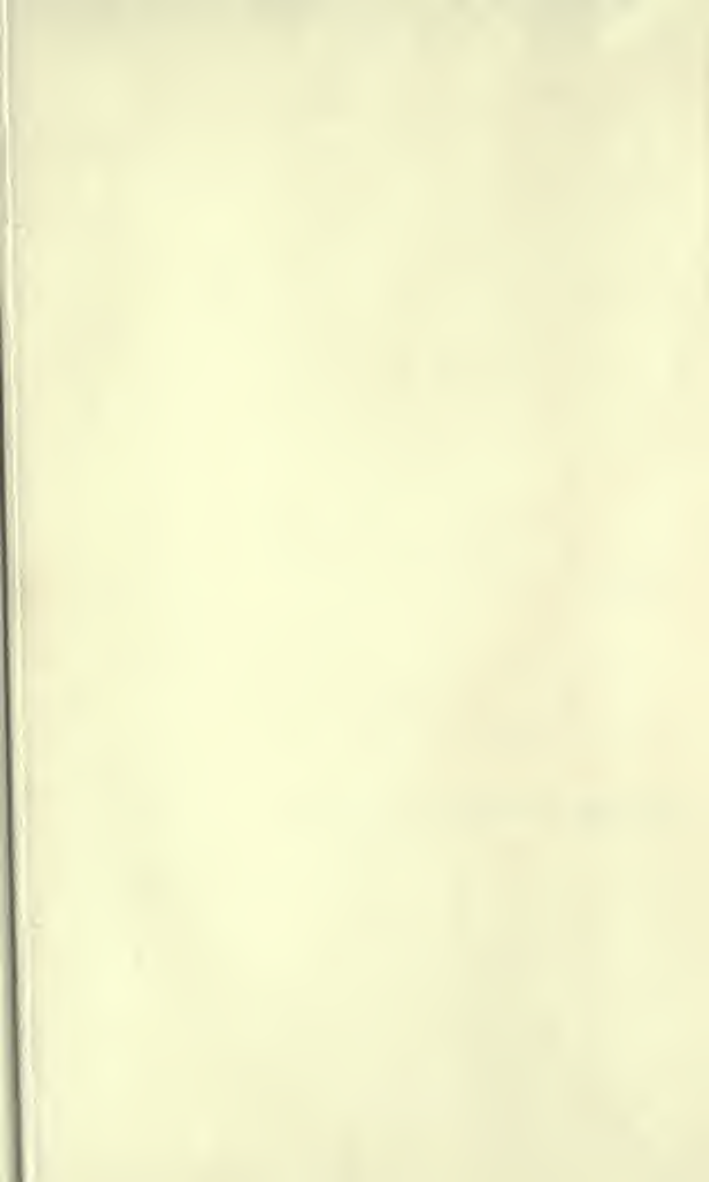
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